TROUBADOUR SONGS

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TROUBADOURS

To Rosalie Miller

TROUBADOUR SONGS

Compiled and Arranged by

CLARENCE DICKINSON

With an Historical Introduction, Biographical Notes, and English texts

by

HELEN A. DICKINSON

Helen A. Dickinson
Clarence Dickinson
Dec. 31-1920

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TAILPIECES: Troubadours and Instruments

Historical Introduction

ACCORDING to historians of literature the period of the poetic and musical activity of the Troubadours opened with the closing years of the eleventh century; but it really had its foundations in the much earlier, kindred art of the wandering minstrel, from time immemorial so popular a figure in the South of France. An old chronicler explains the early ascendancy of the South in the arts of music and poetry with the ancient tradition that when he apportioned his great realm Charlemagne gave Provence to the musicians, poets, and minstrels; at any rate, it was the case that not one of its many small courts was considered complete without its poet or minstrel. With the Crusades and the dawning of the age of chivalry and romance in both social and religious life kings and princes and other members of the high nobility devoted themselves to the making of "verse" and music, and developed the largely intuitive practice of the minstrel into an art.

These were the Troubadours, and their name, derived from the Provençal verb *trobar* (*trobaire*), to find, and supposed to have been adopted as a new word in the language during the Crusades, influenced in its formation by the Arabic, implies the original invention of both his poetry and his music by each poet-musician. When the fashion spread to the North, they were given there the name Trouvères, from the French verb *trouver*, to find. For every new song, therefore, a new verse form and a new musical form must be created if the singer were to prove himself worthy of the name.

His instrument of accompaniment was the vielle—the ancestor of the violin—or the mandorla, a lute or small harp. If he could not play it sufficiently well himself he took with him on his many journeys from court to court and castle to castle one who could play, and, if necessary, sing for him, known as the *Jongleur*.

From the great period of poetic activity of the Troubadours of Provence there remain to us about two thousand five hundred poems. The musical manuscripts are much fewer in number, amounting only to about two hundred and fifty-nine. These consist of melodies only, written on anywhere from two to eight lines drawn in red ink; there is no division into measures. It is altogether likely that much of the music was simply delivered orally and was not written down; indeed space was left for it in some of the beautifully illuminated manuscripts, which was never filled in.

That the earliest Troubadour music, as that of No. II in this book, by Bernard of Ventadour, bears some slight traces of the influence of the Gregorian music of the Church is not to be wondered

at, as all Troubadours of high rank—and several who were of lowly birth—were educated in the monastic schools, for the Church had a monopoly of learning in those days. In most cases the earliest Troubadours took the types of melody used by the minstrels and composed them into an art form which was, naturally, not altogether unaffected by the music of the Church.

The earliest Troubadour whose poems have come down to us was Guillaume (Guilhelm) VII, Count of Poitiers, afterwards the ninth Duke of Acquitaine, who, the chronicler records, "knew well *trobar e cantar*"—"to invent and to sing"—; unfortunately none of his music except a fragment of one melody has been preserved. The name "Troubadour" had been in use before his day, however, for an injunction had been issued against the introduction of their "infamous and diabolical love songs" into the musical service of the Church; and during the lifetime of this very Guillaume a poet at the Court of Frederick Barbarossa was complaining of the decline of the art.

Nevertheless, the great period of Troubadour poetry and music dawned with Count Guillaume, whose gifts, together with his high rank, gave the Troubadour his distinctive place in art and society. He led along a path followed by other members of the nobility, among whom the most exalted was Richard Cœur de Lion, King of England.

From the South the art spread to the north of France when Eleanor of Acquitaine, granddaughter of this Duke Guillaume, married the King of France, and her far-famed and devoted Troubadour, Bernard de Ventadour, graced her northern court with his art, and inspired many to follow his example in the making of poetry and music, so that the Trouvères of the North came to rival the Troubadours of Provence in number and importance. And later, when this same Eleanor became Queen of England, as the wife of King Henry II, the art sprang up there through her encouragement and the example of the poets at her court, among them, still, Bernard of Ventadour.

The theme of the Troubadour's song was, first of all, love, but love of the most exalted kind, love of an ideal. As a secondary theme there sometimes figured any one of the various hindrances to love, as, especially, the false friend, the slanderer, who appears in No. III, "Mercy I Cry," by the Châtelain de Coucy. But the songs are, for the most part, in praise of a lady heavenly fair and flawless, to whom the poet pledges undying fealty. Sometimes he rejoices in the contemplation of her beauty and the opportunity for actual service with its rare and unspeakably cherished reward of a kind look or a smile; again life is embittered because of her indifference to his devotion. Many poems picture his desolation in being separated from her for long years; in some cases she is a *Princesse Lointaine* whom he has never beheld with his eyes but of whom he sings none the less passionately. Such an one was the beloved of the great Troubadour Jaufre Rudel. "He

was a very noble man, and Prince of Blaye, and he fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli, whom he had never seen, but because of the praise that he had heard of her by the pilgrims who came from Antioch; and he made many songs about her, with remarkable melodies but less beautiful verses. At last, for the sake of seeing her, he took the Cross and set out to sea. And on the voyage a grievous illness fell upon him so that those who were on the ship with him thought he was dead; but they brought him to Tripoli and carried him to an inn, thinking him dead. And it was made known to the Countess, and she came to him, and took him in her arms, and he knew she was the Countess and recovered consciousness, and praised God and thanked Him for having let him live to see her. And so he died in his lady's arms."

One Troubadour only, of them all, did not sing of love—Marcabru of Gascony, who presented that utter anomaly, a Troubadour-woman-hater; he wrote only *Sirventes*, that is to say, political poems describing feats of arms, or addressed to great men to whom he offered the homage of his verse.

But of all other Troubadours love was the principal theme. As the lady of the singer's devotion was matchless, his songs addressed to her were, in the poet's estimation, incomparably beautiful. It was, therefore, no undue self-esteem which moved Bernard de Ventadour to begin one of his songs thus: "Marvel not that I sing better than any other!" It was only his lady's due that this should be so.

So exalted was the object of the Troubadour's adoration and so worshipful the spirit of his poetic tribute, that these secular love songs could be, and very commonly were, converted into sacred songs by the change of a mere word or two of the text; in many poems all that was necessary was to substitute the Virgin or the Church for the adored lady. This characteristic persisted even in the poetry of the Mastersingers in the sixteenth century; Hans Sachs changed just a few words in his "Awake My Heart's Beloved" and converted it into a sacred song for the "Wittenberg Nightingale," as he called Martin Luther.

But although love was the principal theme of the Troubadour, he did not write of it exclusively. Besides the love song there was the *Sirventes*, which was written out of loyalty to a great prince or military leader, or which might be a song of the Crusades. For this the author departed from the first rule of his troubadourhood, and adopted a form of verse already in use in some well-known song, of which he borrowed the melody also. A subdivision of the Sirventes was the *Planh*, a funeral dirge, or plaint. To the same family belonged also the *Tenso*, a poem in the form of a debate on questions of gallantry, love, politics, or morals.

Then there were less personal songs, narrative or dramatic in character, as the *Alba* (L'Aube),

a Song of the Dawn; the *Toile*, or *Chanson d'Histoire*, which told a story; the *Romance*, which was almost the same as the *Toile* but gayer in tone; it required also that the author should claim in his story to repeat only what he himself had actually seen or heard; the *Pastourelle* and Music of the Dance.

The Age of the Troubadours closed with Guiraut Riquier, of Toulouse, the period of whose life extended from 1254 to 1292, and of whose works there are preserved twenty-four poems and six epistles which in their didactic character reveal unmistakably the decadence of the art. The Albigensian Wars destroyed the independence of the South of France and so impoverished the ruling houses and the nobility in general that they were unable to continue their generous patronage of the arts. Most deeply interested in the course of the struggle and in the defense of the right of the Albigenses to religious liberty was the renowned Troubadour Bertran de Born, of whom one of his contemporaries wrote, "He is a good knight, a good warrior, a good wooer, and a good troubadour." He wrote many love songs, but liked almost better still to write songs which stirred to strife, for "above all things he delighted in the pomp and glory of war." Dante beheld in him a sower of discord, who had set the sons of Henry II against their father and involved France in war; therefore he pictured him in the Infernal Regions (*Inferno*, Canto XXXVIII) carrying his severed head in his hand, and speaking thus, "In severe punishment for having parted persons who should have been joined I carry my brain, alas! parted from its beginning which is in my body."

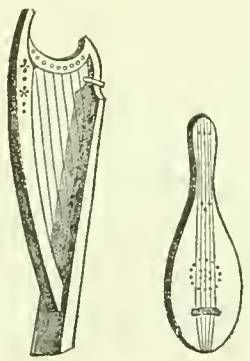
But although with the long period of war and the consequent suffering and impoverishment the cult of the Troubadours ceased, its spirit never died out of French poetry. It was, indeed, the source of the lyric poetry of France, and poems with music, wholly in the Troubadour vein and manner, were written by spiritual successors of the Troubadours even in the sixteenth century, among them such an one as No. VI, "Now My Lightsome Youth is Gone" by the courtier-poet-musician, Clément Marot.

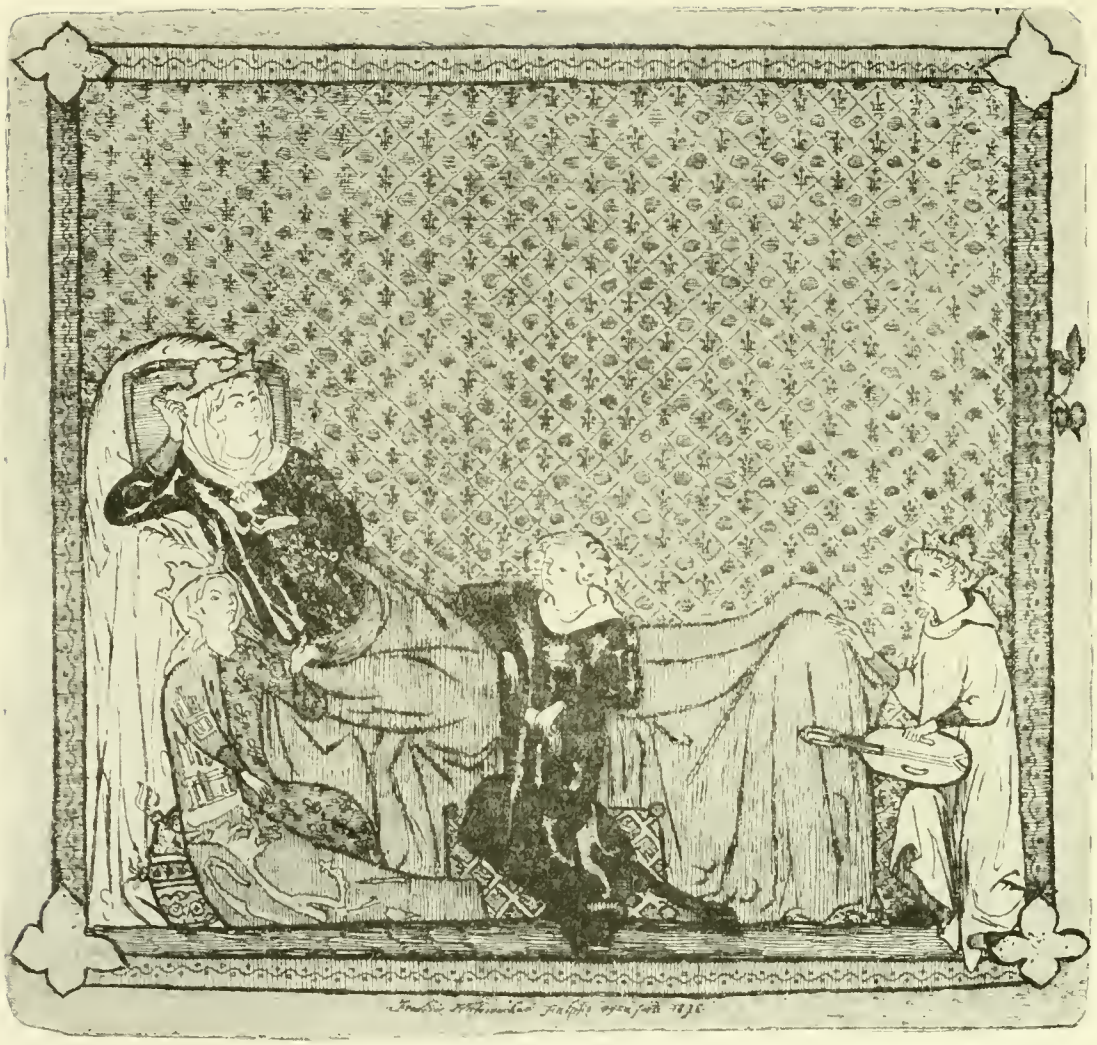
Biographical Notes

No. I. "ALL THOUGHTS WITHIN MY HEART THAT DWELL"

Anonymous.

This *Chant d'Amour* is by a singer whose name is unknown; that he was of late date is evident by comparison with the very early Troubadour song immediately following. It is one of the songs which by the mere change of a word or two of the text, or even by the use of an occasional capital letter, could be interpreted as a sacred song.





A Troubadour Sings for the Queen of France
From a XIV Century Tapestry

No. II. "LO! NOW I BID FAREWELL TO VENTADORN"

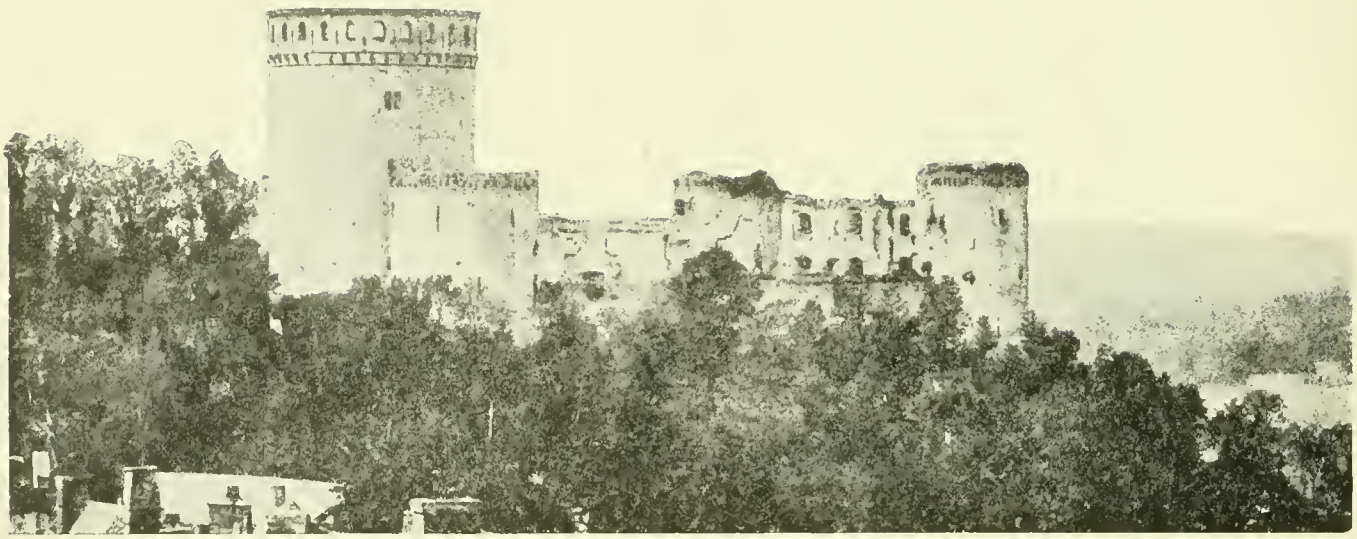
Bernard de Ventadour.

One of the greatest of all the Troubadours, Bernard de Ventadour—or Ventadorn—began life under the patronage of Viscount Ebles II of Ventadorn, himself a Troubadour. Of Bernard the old chronicler wrote, "He is a fair man and skilful, and he knows well how to compose and sing, and he is courteous and well-taught." He quitted Ventadorn, as this song tells us, because of the indifference of the adored one, whose coldness drove him from his home. How great a grief this must have been we can feel when we read his lines on Ventadorn: "No country in all the world is so beautiful as France, no province so gracious as Acquitaine, no village so charming as Ventadorn, no street so lovely as its street, and dearest of all the little alley that leads to my home."

The "scornful lady" was probably the object of the poet's youthful devotion, Marguerite of Turennes, wife of Viscount Ebles III. He presently attached himself to the Court of Eleanor of Acquitaine, daughter of the First Troubadour, Guillaume, Duke of Acquitaine and Count of Poitou. Eleanor became the wife of Henry of Anjou, Duke of Normandy, who ascended the throne of England in 1154. Bernard apparently accompanied him there, as in one of his poems he sings: "This song is quite complete that no word is lacking, beyond the land of Normandy, across the wild deep sea. And I am far from my lady. . . . If the English King and Norman Duke wills it I shall see her before the winter overtakes us." At another time he writes as if he greatly enjoyed his English sojourn, "For the King's sake I am English and Norman, and were it not for her who charms me I should stay till after Christmas."

"Lo! Now I Bid Farewell to Ventadorn" is a typical song of the early Troubadours musically; very many others could be cited which are quite similar to it in its character of semi-recitative with frequent and more or less elaborate ornamentation. The greatest masters of the art, among whom was Bernard, are distinguished above the rest by their triumph over the prosaic and their achievement of rhythmic freshness and charm, and of what might be called linear beauty. In the interpretation of all their songs the rhythm should be felt; the phrases should not be too square-cut, the *curve* of the melody should be preserved. The singer is permitted unbounded liberty in declamation of the text and expression of the sentiment; in the original manuscript there is no division into measures, and they have been indicated here only for the sake of greater ease in reading.

Bernard de Ventadour.



Château Coucy

No. III. "MERCY I CRY WHO ALL BEWILDERED STAND"

Châtelain de Coucy.

The Châtelain de Coucy took his name from Château Coucy, in our day one of the most picturesque ruins and most beautiful remains of a mediæval castle in all Europe, which has now been utterly destroyed by the Germans. The thirteenth century *roman* "The Lady of Fayel" presents him as one of the most distinguished poets and courtiers of the age. An ancient tale has persisted that the husband of the lady of his devotion, being a rough man with no appreciation of the code of chivalry or the cult of the Troubadours, was consumed with jealousy of the poet, so that he caused him to be killed, and his heart served up to his lady at dinner. Whereupon, when he had taunted her, and made known to her what was the meat that she had eaten, she passed through the window to one of the towers of the castle and threw herself down to her death.

The story is told also of another one or two of the Troubadours, and is undoubtedly a mere fable of later invention. The Châtelain de Coucy went on a Crusade to the Holy Land in the company of the English King, Richard the Lion-Hearted, in 1190, and was killed two years later, in battle against the Saracens.

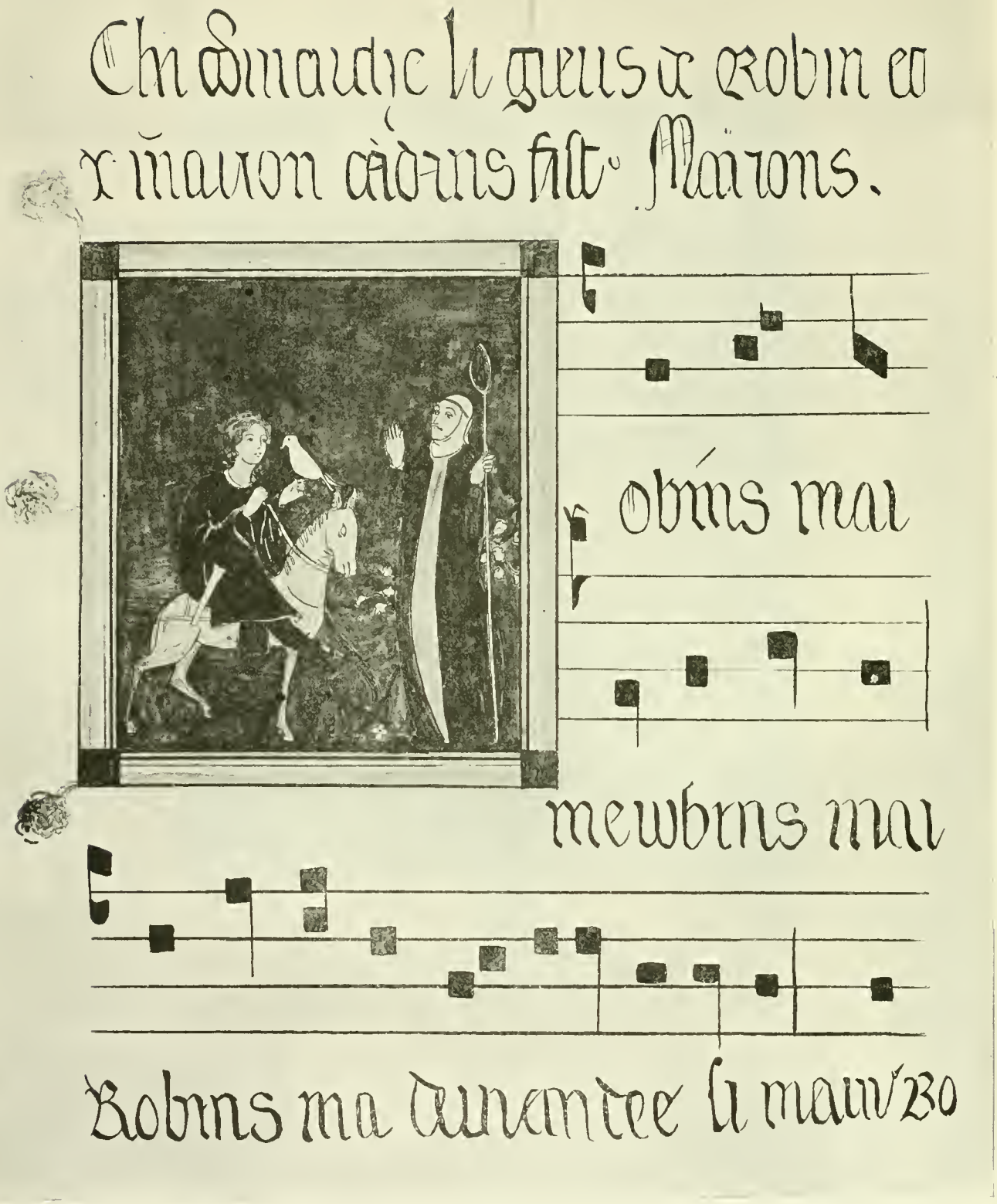
"Arras" with Troubadour and Lady
XIII Century

No. IV. "IT WAS IN MAY"

Moniot d'Arras.

"It was in May" is a gay, springtime song, by Moniot, a famous Trouvère of the thirteenth century, in the ancient city of Arras, celebrated for its marvellously beautiful tapestries woven after the designs of the greatest artists. So supreme in this art was it that its name was commonly substituted for the common noun and in mediæval romances a beautiful hanging was spoken of as an "arras." This picturesque old city was one of those that suffered devastation at the hands of the Germans in 1917.

The little song is in itself an "arras": a *mille fleur* background of the blossoms of May; a fountain; a jongleur playing his vielle; a cavalier and a charming damsel dancing on the flowery mead. The song is followed by a dance such as the lovers may have enjoyed on that delightful day in May. Such dances, written on the theme of a song, are occasionally found on the pages which have been left blank to cover and protect it in the ancient manuscript. They are invariably in later notation and musical style. This one was added probably about a century after the original song was written.



Facsimile of Original Manuscript of song "Robin Loves Me," by Adam de la Hâle, 1285

No. V. "ROBIN LOVES ME"

Adam de la Hâle.

Adam de la Hâle, also a native of Arras, was not only a Trouvère of renown, but the composer of the earliest French comedy with music, "Le Jeu de Robin et Marion," which was produced about 1285 at the Court of the King of Naples. In this *opéra comique* he introduced many songs such as this "Robin Loves Me," some of which were written by himself while others were adaptations of popular Troubadour songs. The picture with which the song is illuminated in the manuscript presents the lady riding on her palfrey, a falcon poised on the forefinger of her uplifted hand as she sings her coquettish little song.

No. VI. "NOW MY LIGHTSOME YOUTH IS GONE"

Clément Marot.

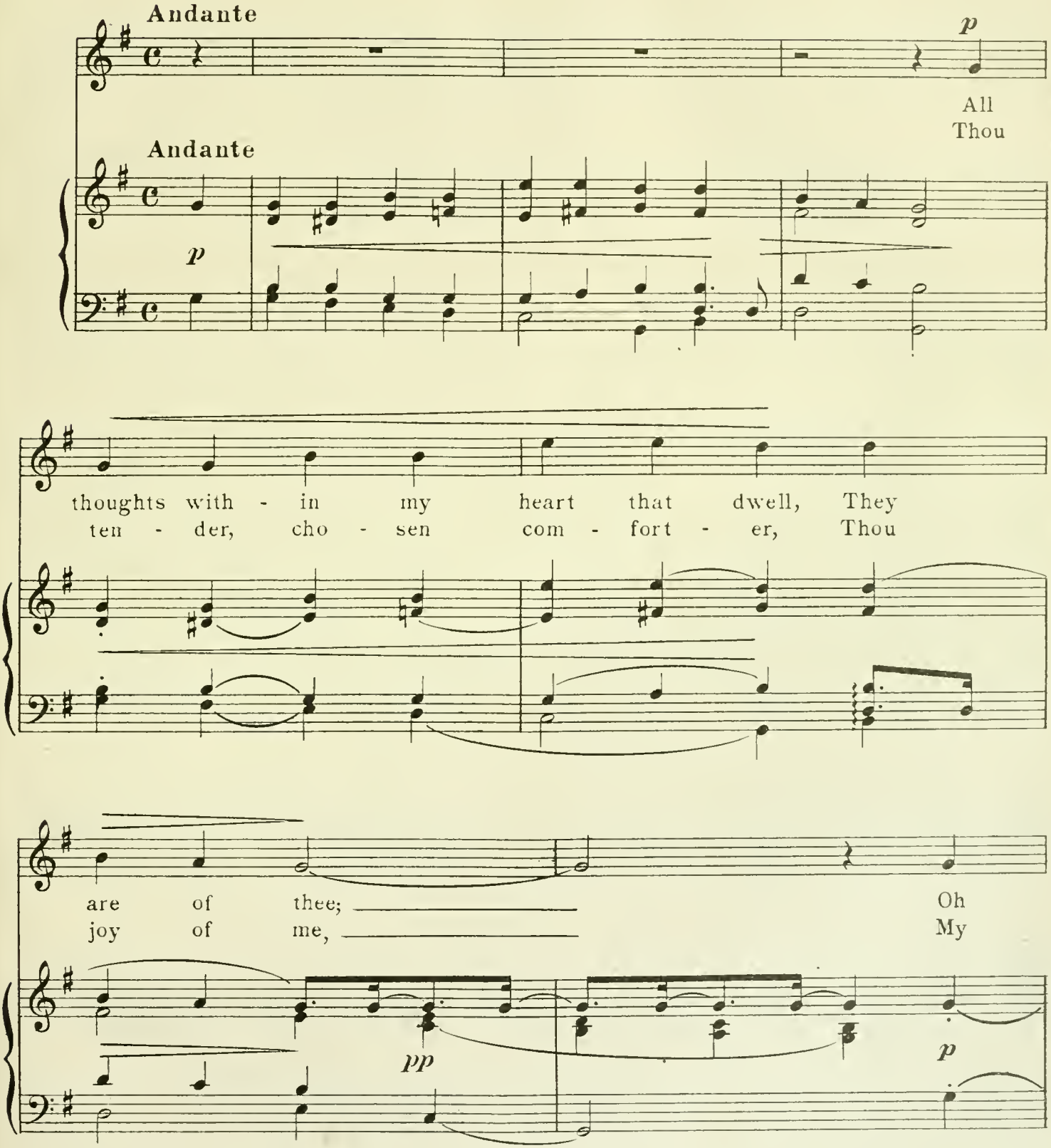
"Now My Lightsome Youth is Gone" is not a Troubadour song in the strict application of the word; it does not fall within the period, as it was written at a much later date. But it is inserted here as an interesting illustration of the influence of the "verse" of the Troubadours upon the later lyric poetry of France and upon the music wedded to that poetry. This little song is indeed wholly in the vein of those of the Troubadours. The lady of the singer's poetic devotion was the fair Diana of Poitiers.

Clément Marot, courtier-poet-musician, son of the poet Jean Marot, was, as a boy, page to Marguerite of Valois, sister of King Francis I of France, and later, Queen of Navarre. In after years, when he had established himself as a great favorite at Court and a famous poet, he became, through her influence, profoundly interested in the Bible and the Reformation. He translated many of the Psalms into French verse, and they were, in the beginning, as highly favored as his love songs. Everyone at court adopted a Psalm, so that one became known as "the King's Psalm," another as "the Duke of Valois' Psalm," another as "the Lady Marguerite's Psalm," and so on. These were sung to popular tunes of the day. But after a time Marot fell into disfavor because of his adherence to the Reformation, and spent the last years of his life in exile, several of them with John Calvin at Geneva, where he continued to make metrical, in this case poetical, versions of the Psalms, which were set to music by Claude Goudimel and Théodore de Bèza for use in the French Church. Marot died suddenly in Turin, in 1544, of poison administered by his enemies.

ALL THOUGHTS WITHIN MY HEART THAT DWELL

I.

CHANT D'AMOUR
(Anonymous)



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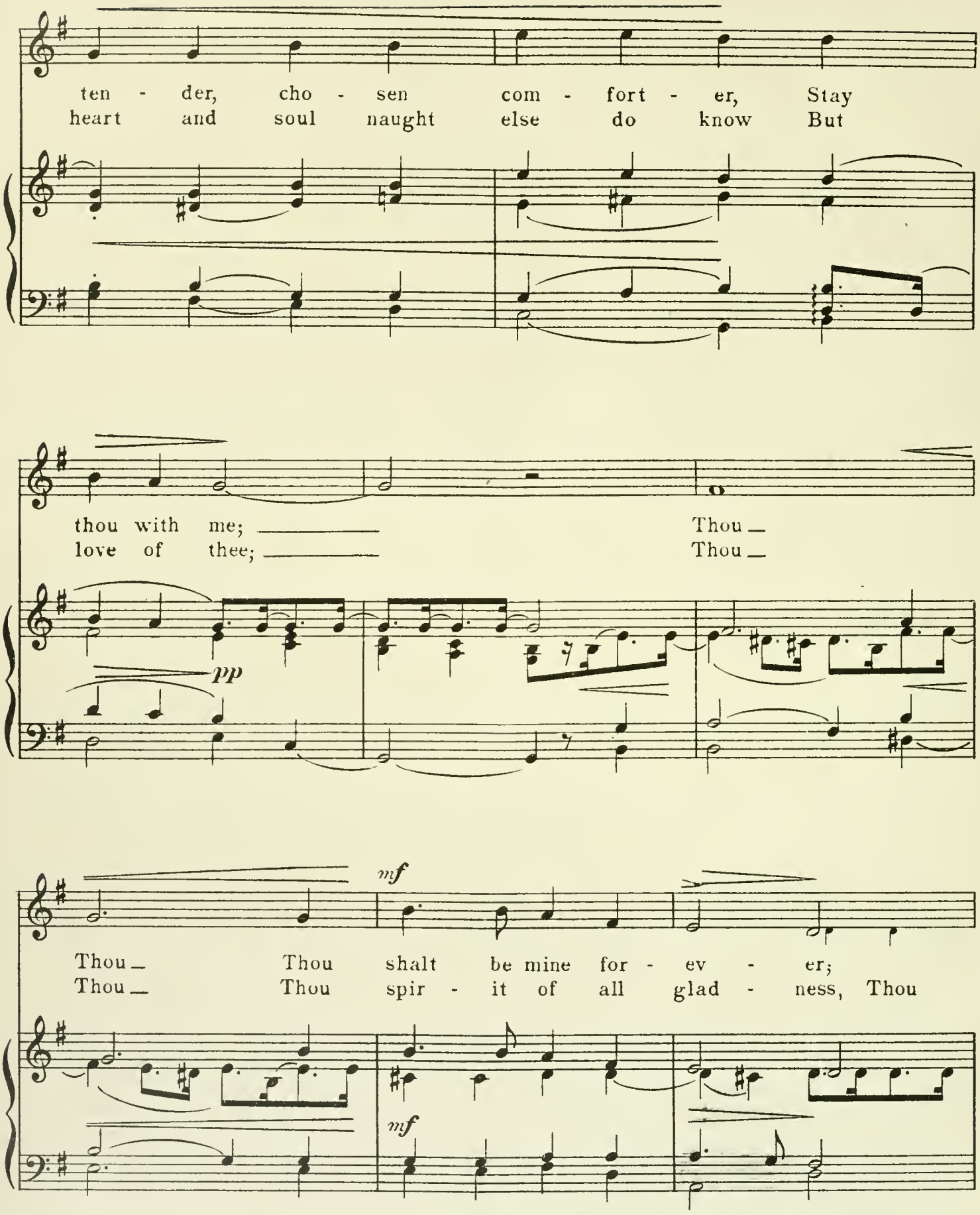
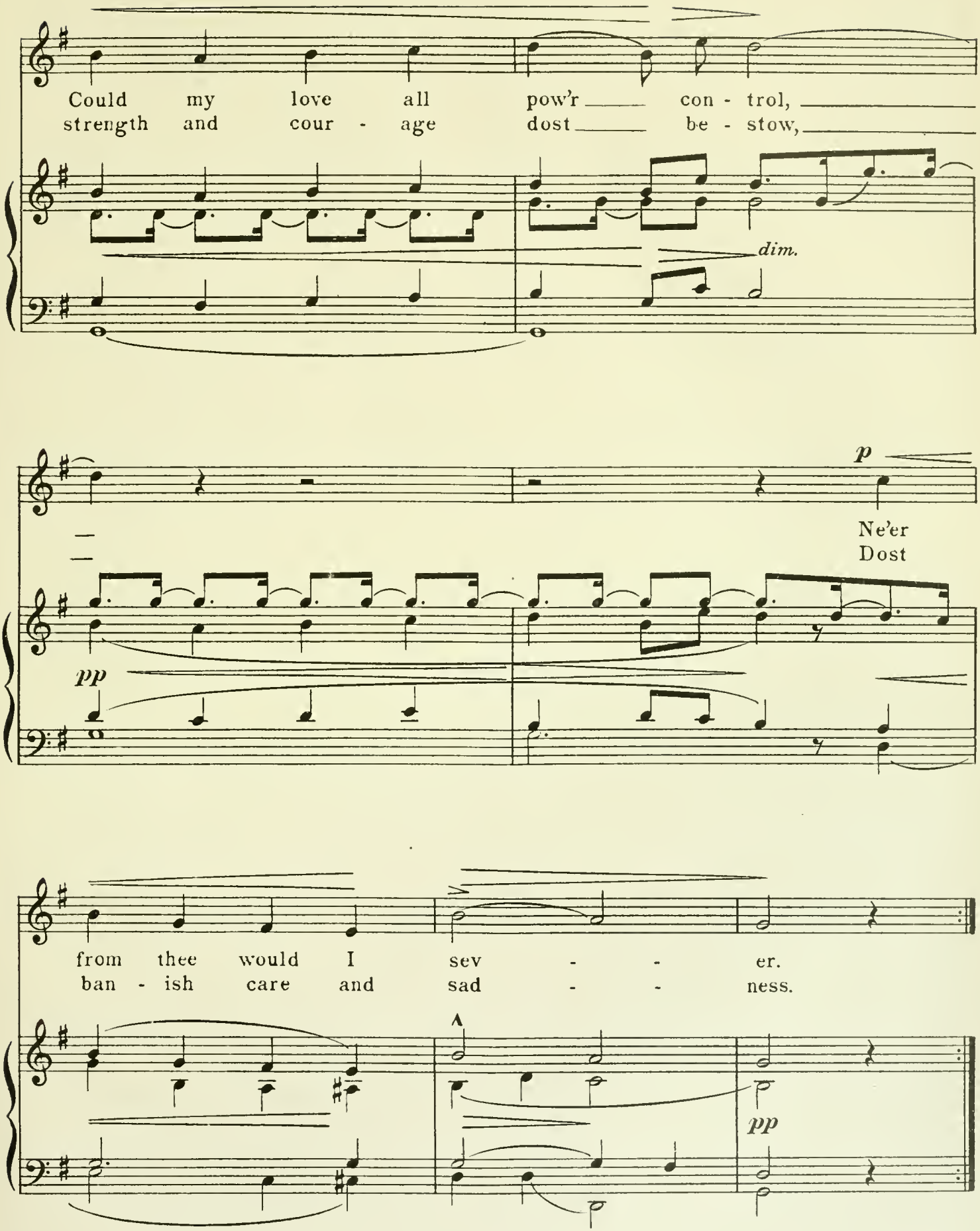
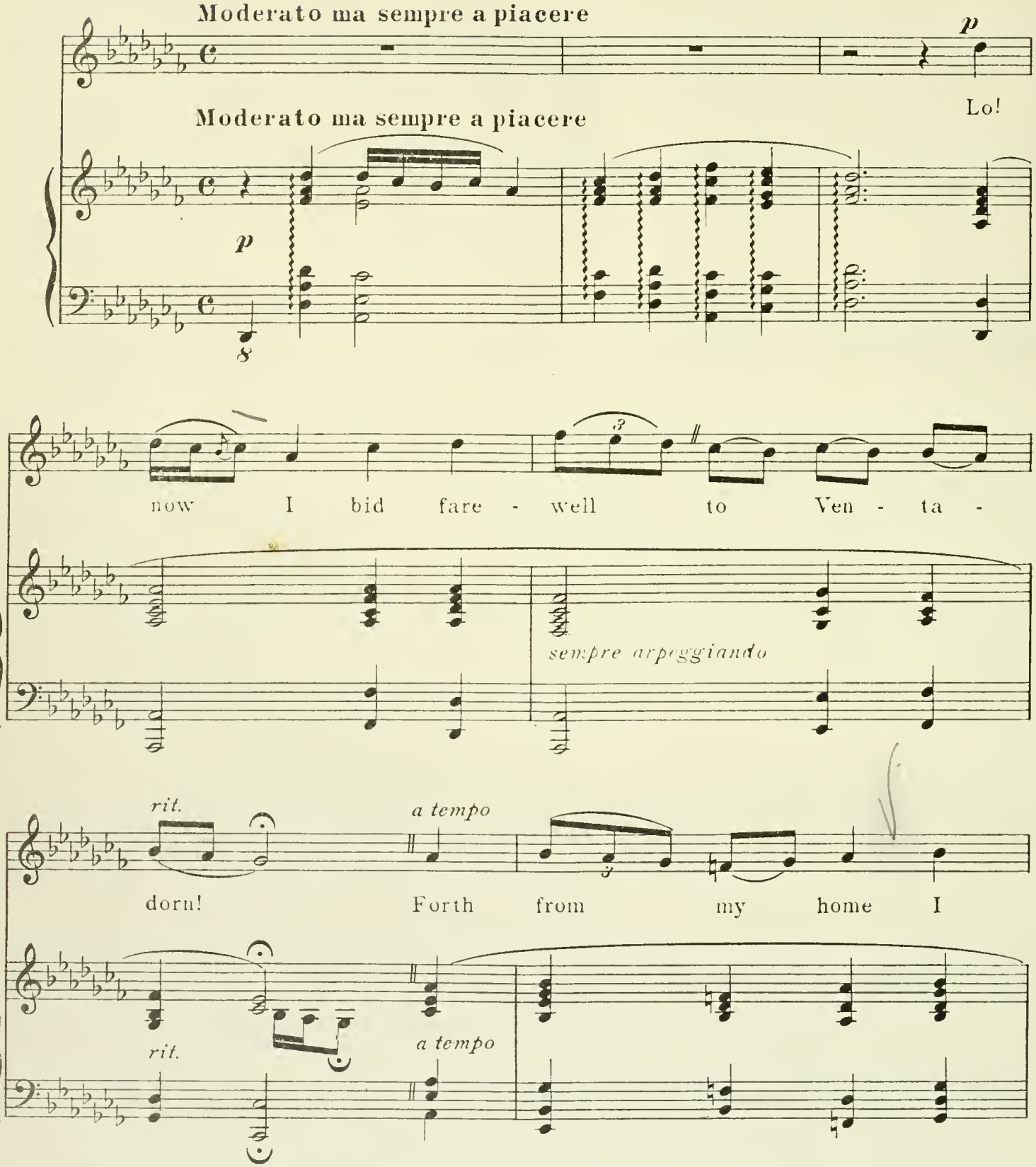

ten - der, cho - sen com - fort - er, Stay
heart and soul naught else do know But
thou with me; Thou
love of thee; Thou
pp
mf
Thou Thou shalt be mine for - ev - er;
Thou Thou spir - it of all glad - ness, Thou
mf


Could my love all pow'r con - trol,
strength and cour - age dost be - stow,
dim.
p
Ne'er
Dost
pp
from thee would I sev - - er.
ban - ish care and sad - - ness.
pp

LO! NOW I BID FAREWELL TO VENTADORN

II.

BERNARD DE VENTADORN
(1145-1195)
Transcribed by Otto Kinkeldey
Accompaniment by Clarence Dickinson



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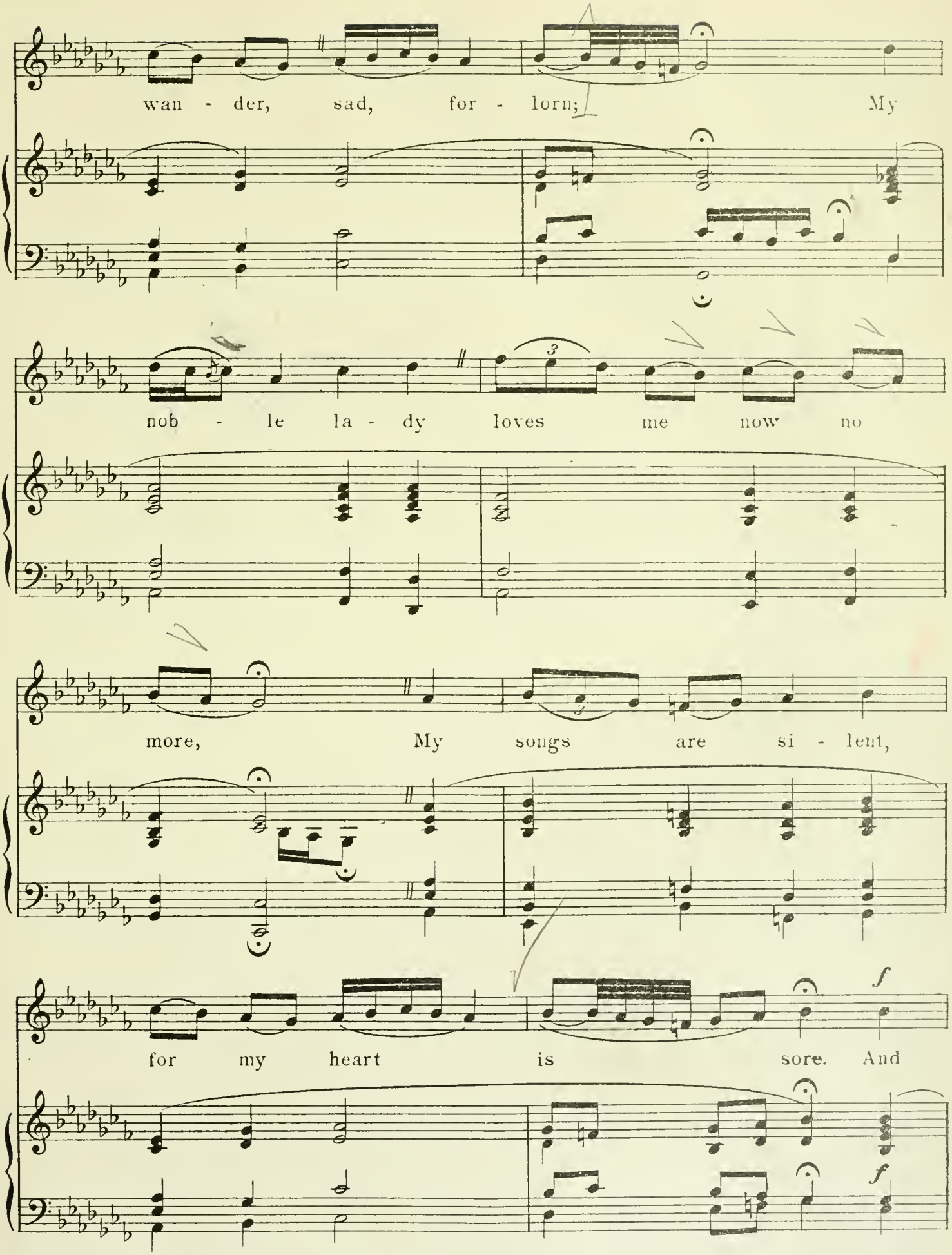
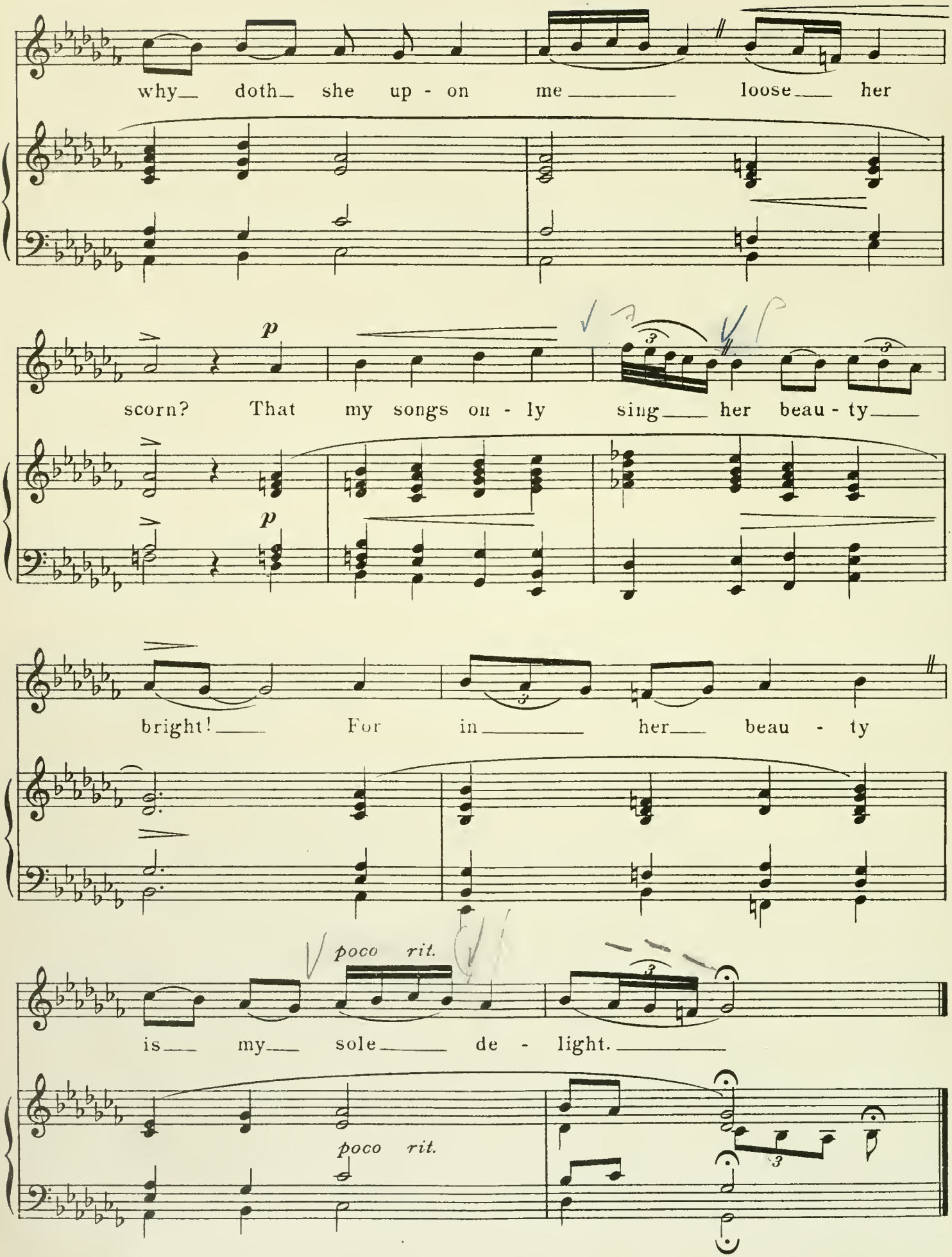
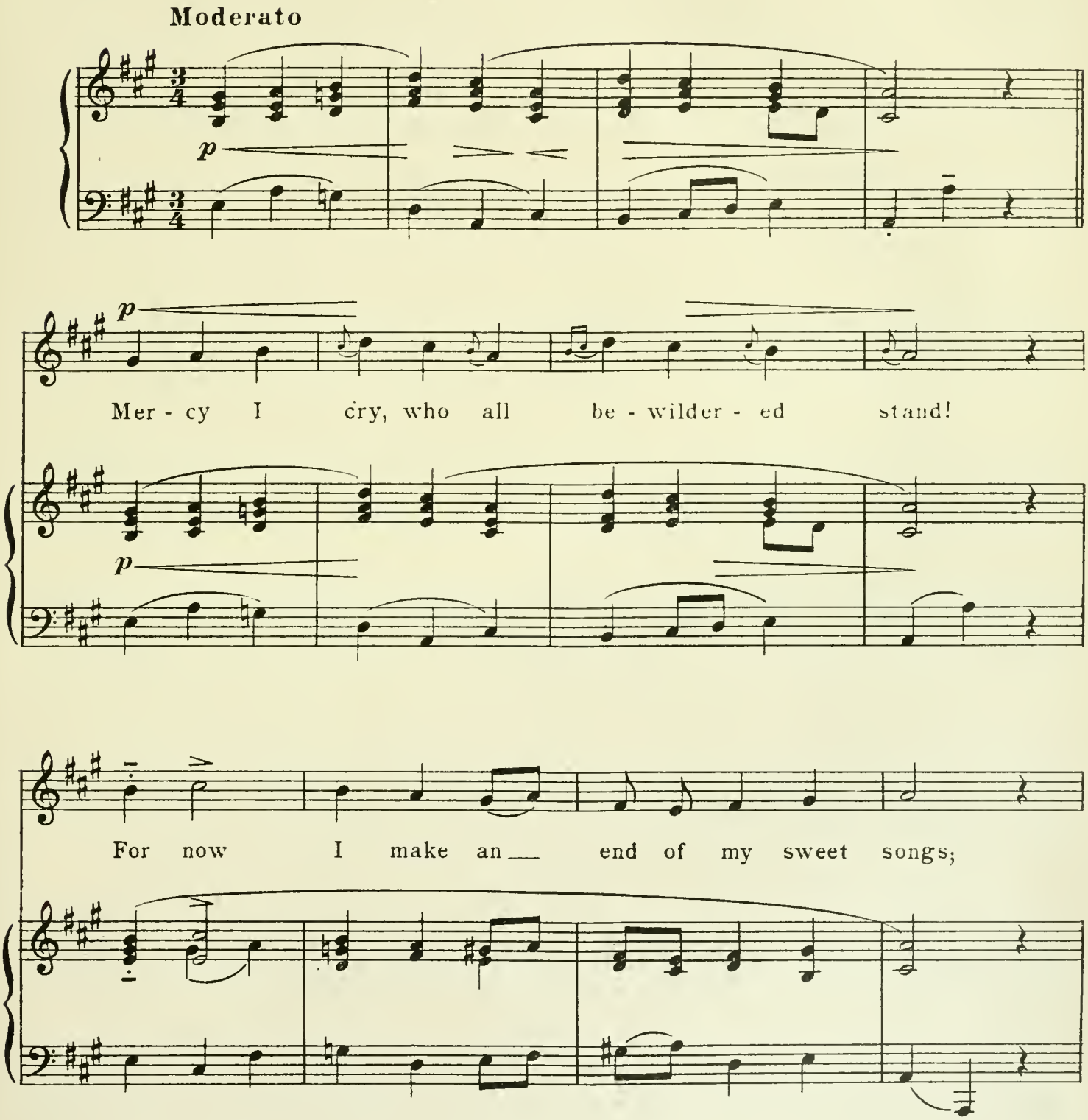

wan - der, sad, for - lorn; My
nob - le la - dy loves me now no
more, My songs are si - lent,
for my heart is sore. And


why doth she up - on me loose her
p
scorn? That my songs on - ly sing her beau - ty
p
bright! For in her beau - ty
poco rit.
is my sole de - light.
poco rit.

MERCY I CRY, WHO ALL BEWILDERED STAND

III.

CHÂTELAIN DE COUCY
(1157-1192)



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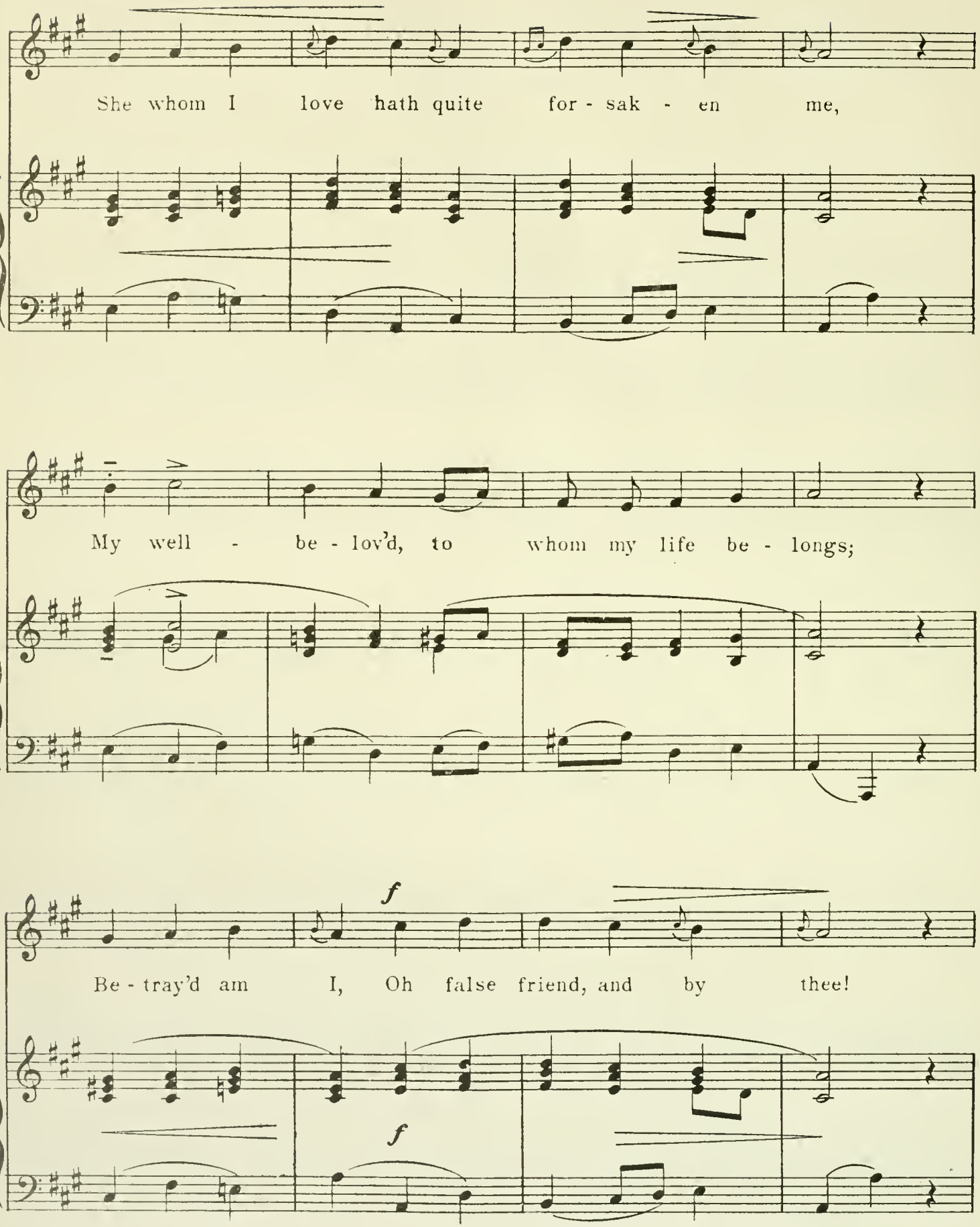
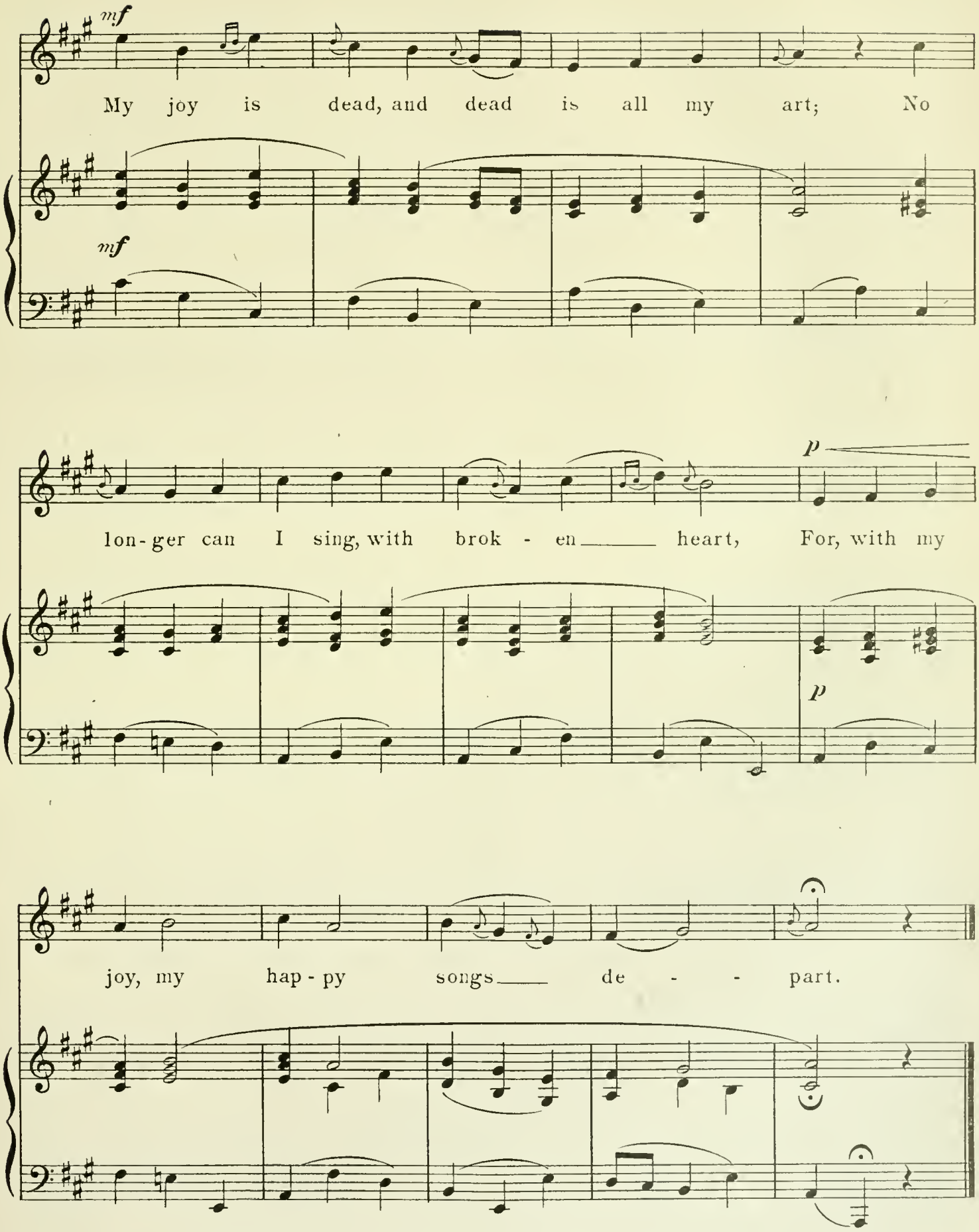
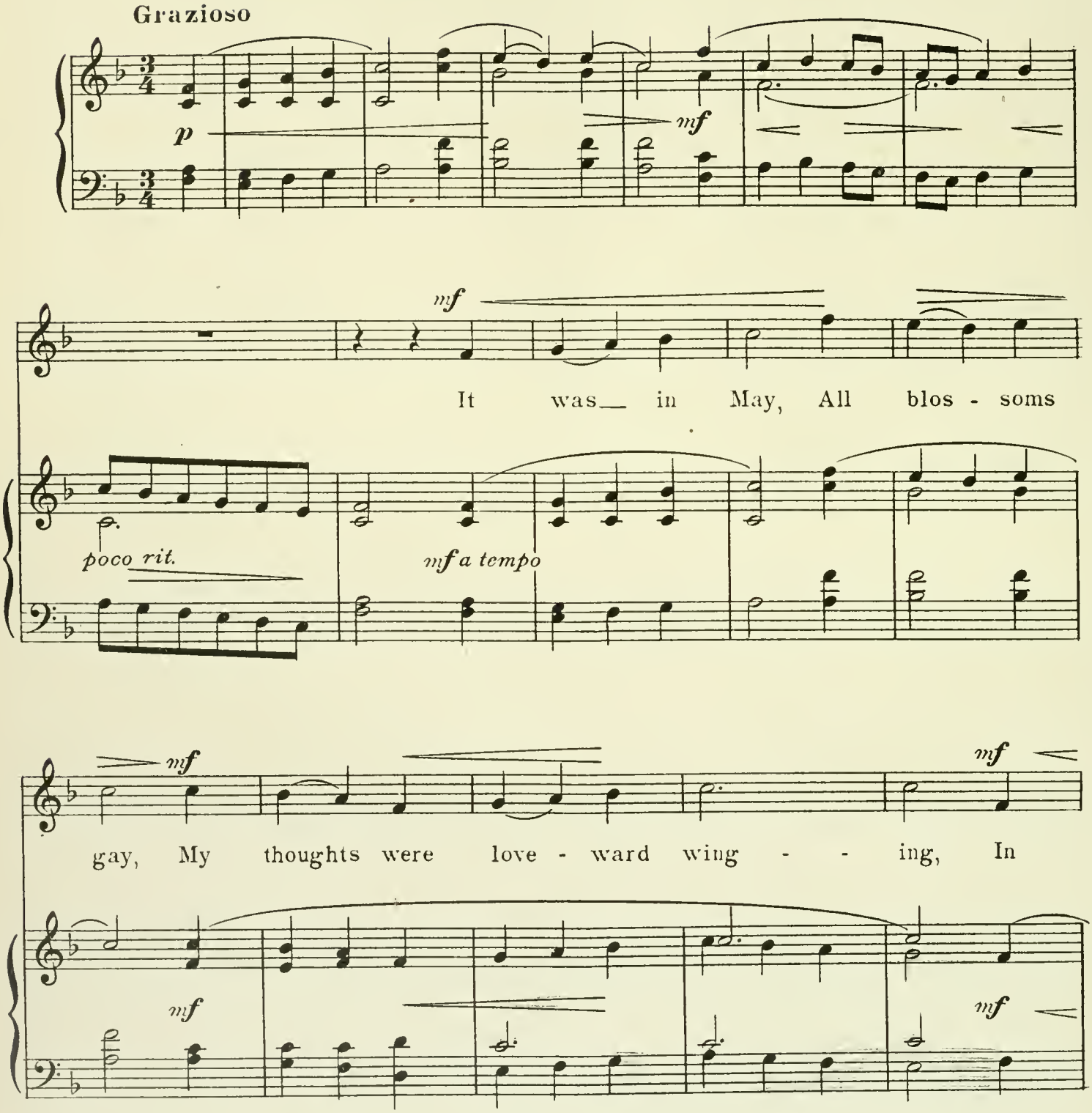

She whom I love hath quite for - sak - en me,
My well - be - lov'd, to whom my life be - longs;
f
Be - tray'd am I, Oh false friend, and by thee!
f


mf
My joy is dead, and dead is all my art; No
mf
lon-ger can I sing, with brok - en heart, For, with my
p
p
joy, my hap-py songs de - - part.

IT WAS IN MAY

IV.

MONIOT D'ARRAS
XIII Century



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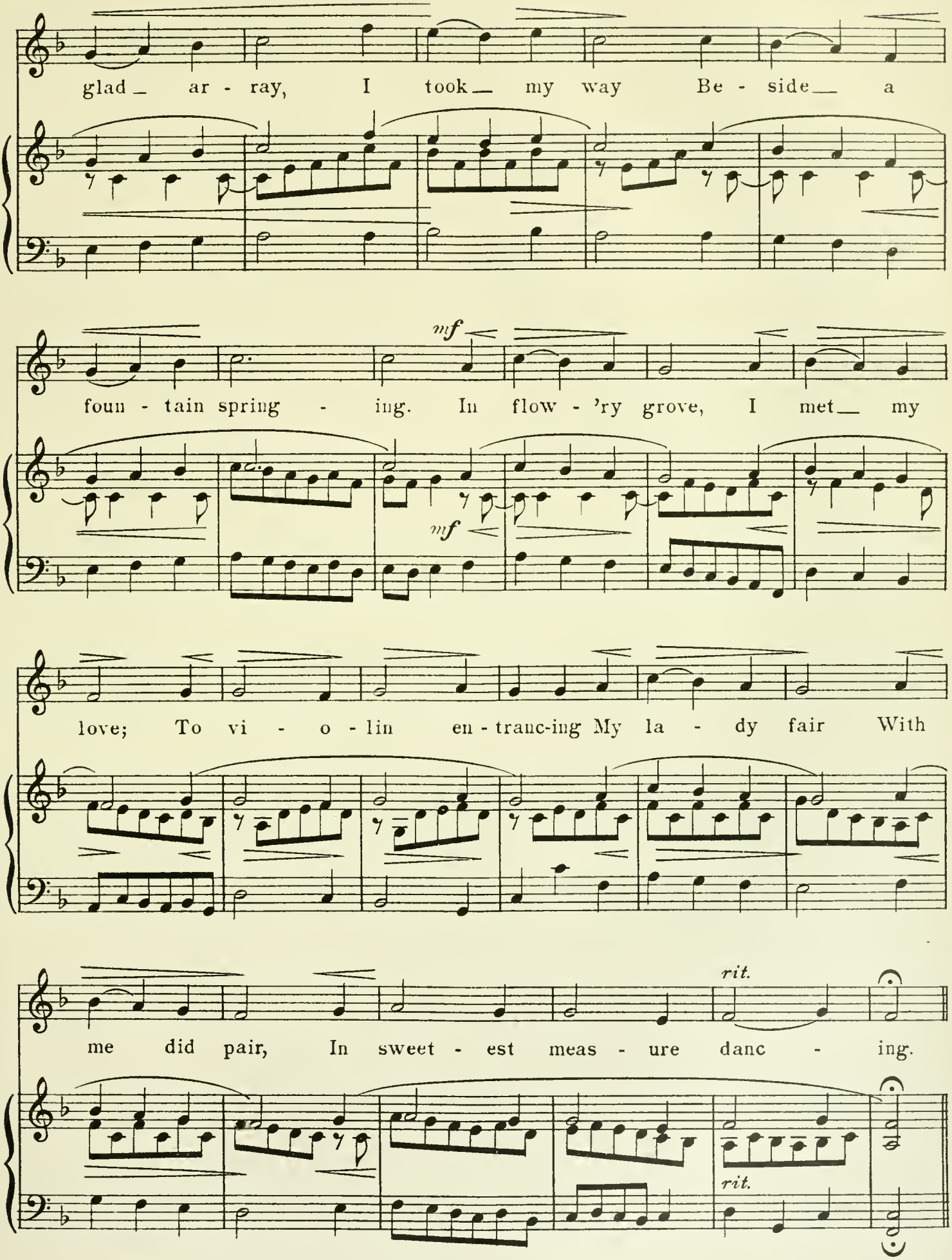

glad_ ar - ray, I took_ my way Be - side_ a
mf
foun - tain spring - ing. In flow - 'ry grove, I met_ my
mf
love; To vi - o - lin en - tranc-ing My la - dy fair With
rit.
me did pair, In sweet - est meas - ure danc - ing.
rit.

DANCE
Allegretto

p

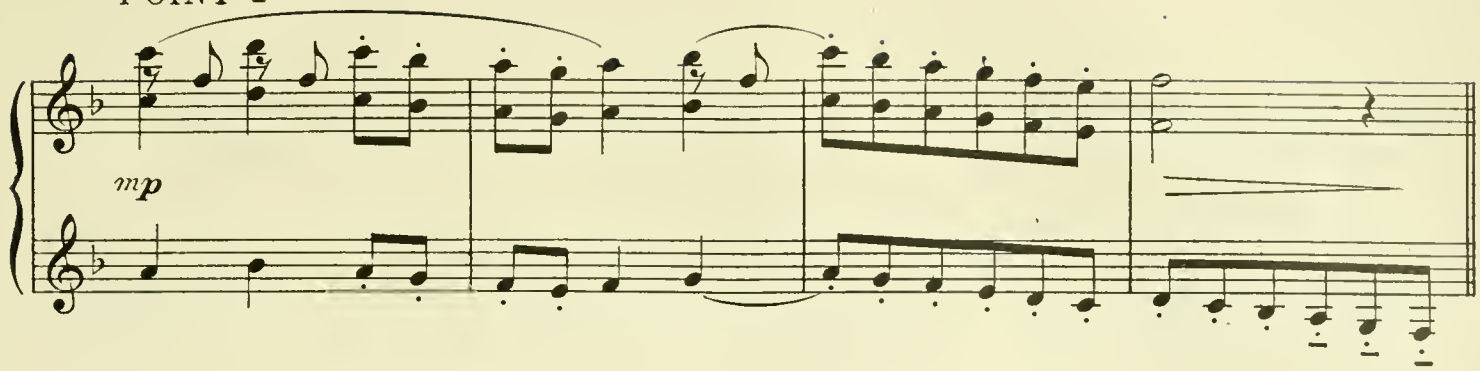
REFRAIN

mf

poco rit.

a tempo

POINT 2



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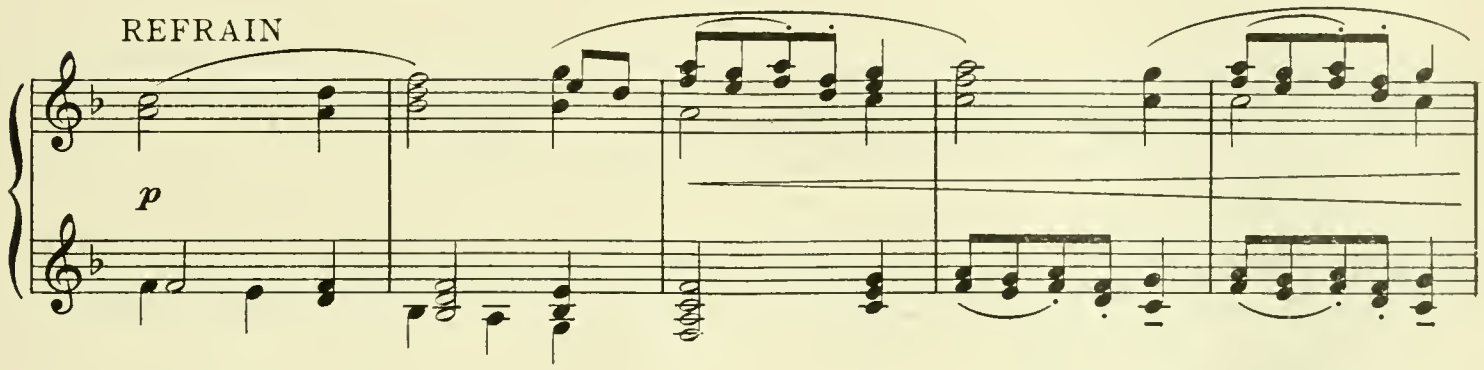
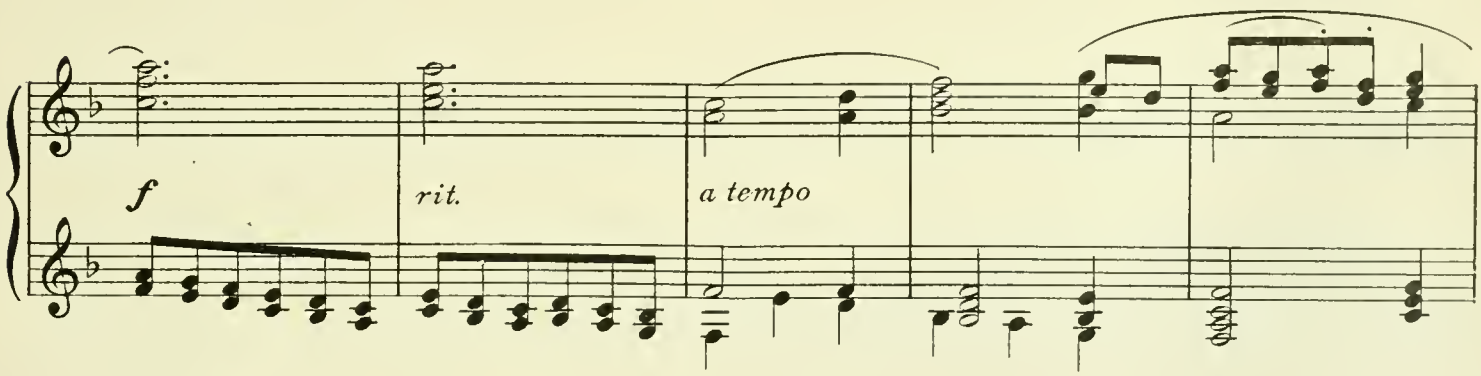
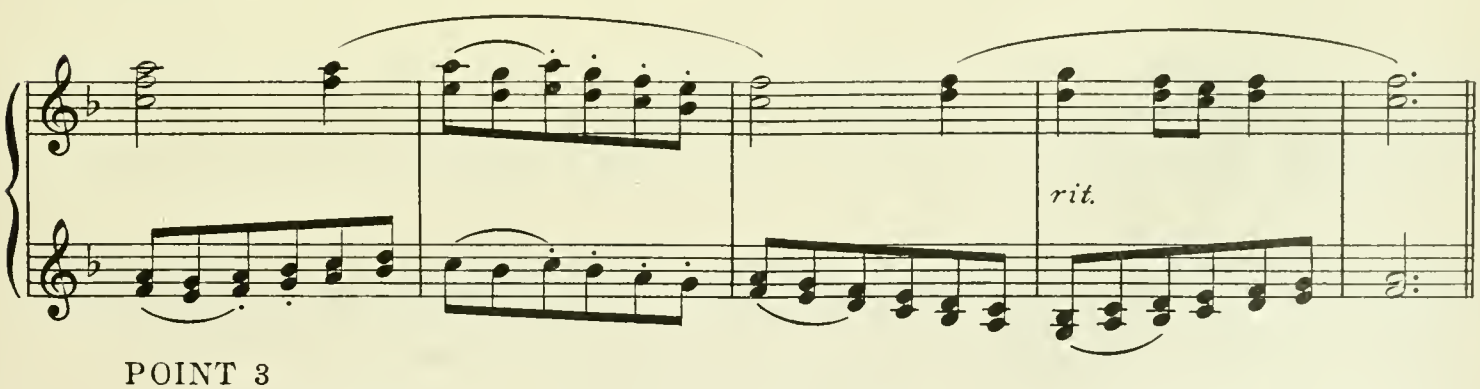
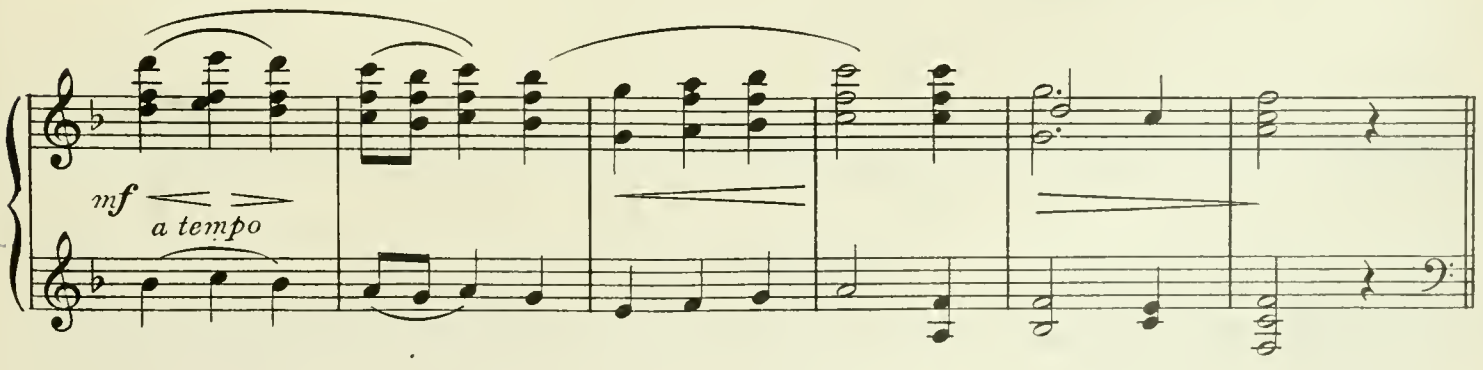






POINT 3



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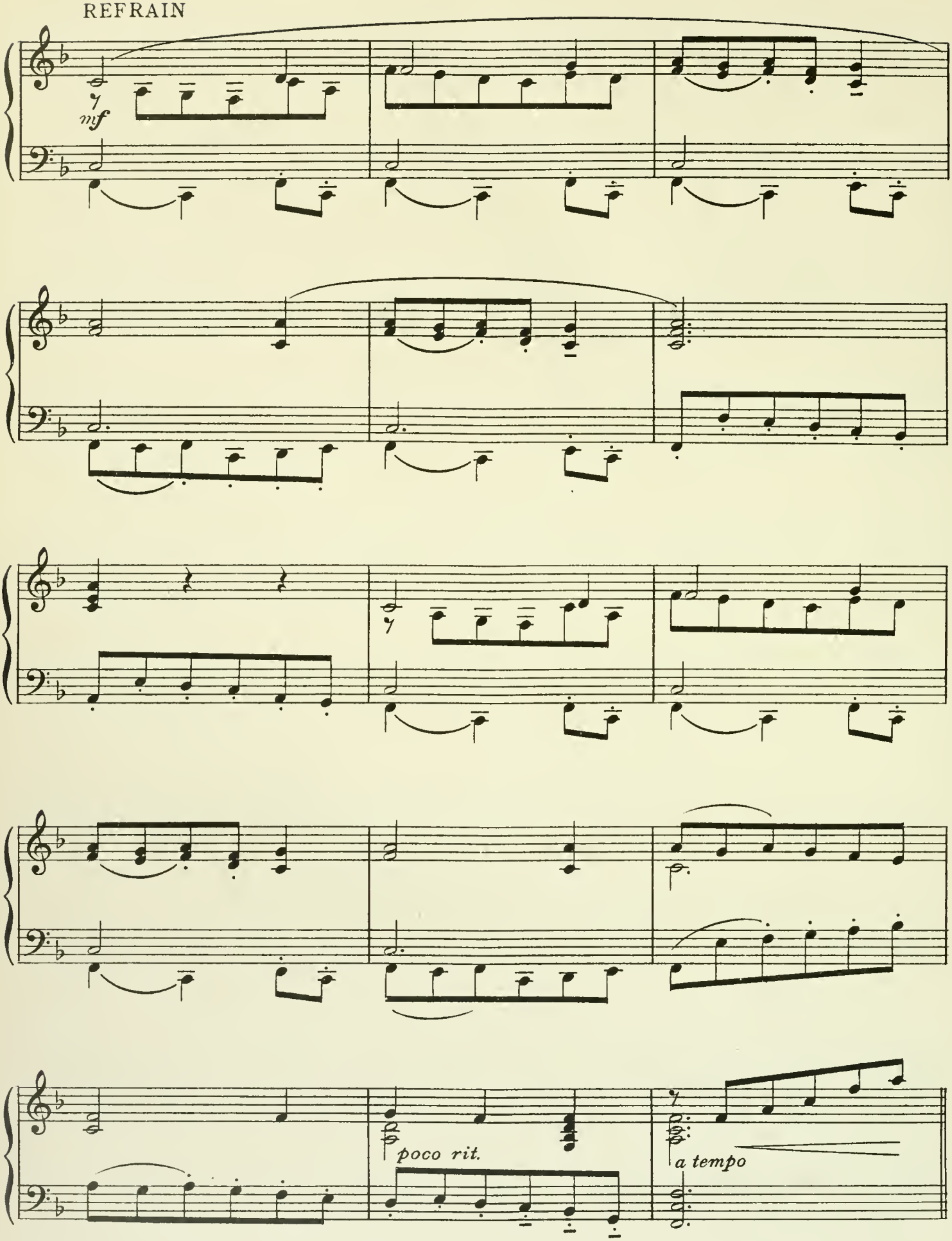


POINT 4

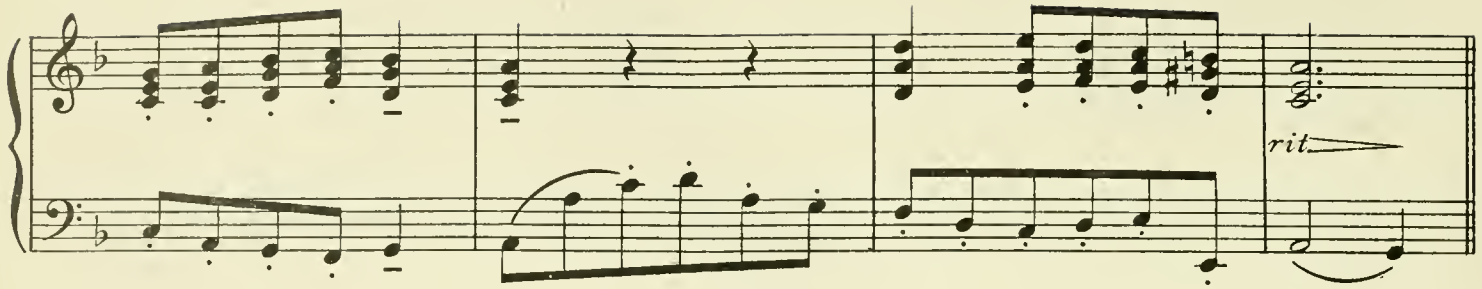
f

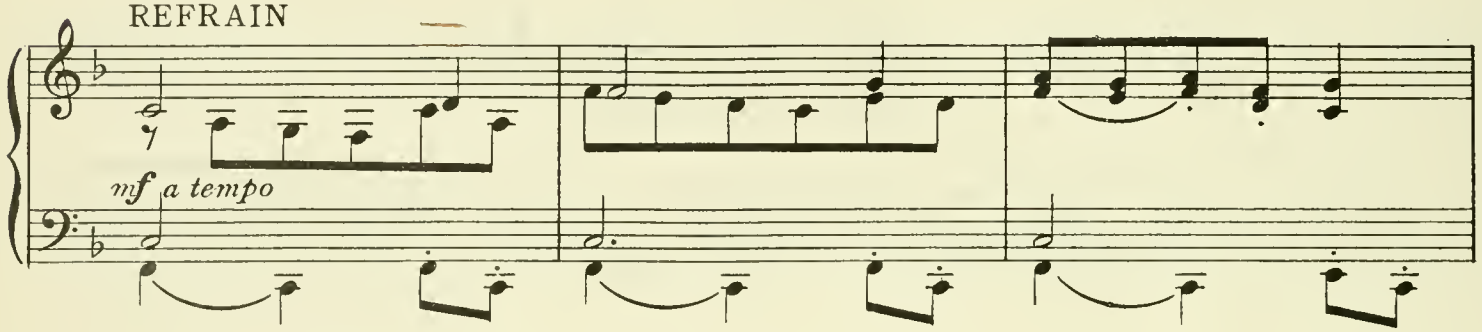
REFRAIN

POINT 5

rit.

p a tempo


rit.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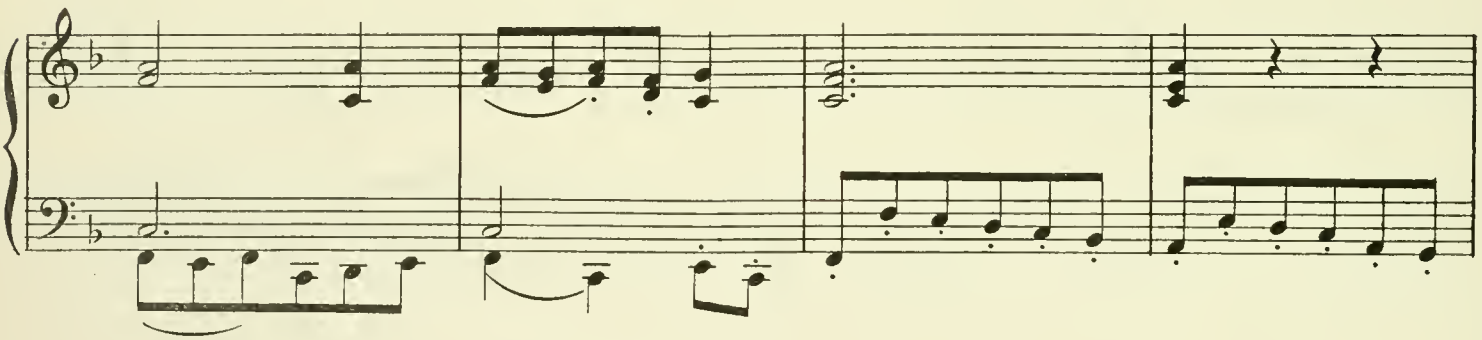
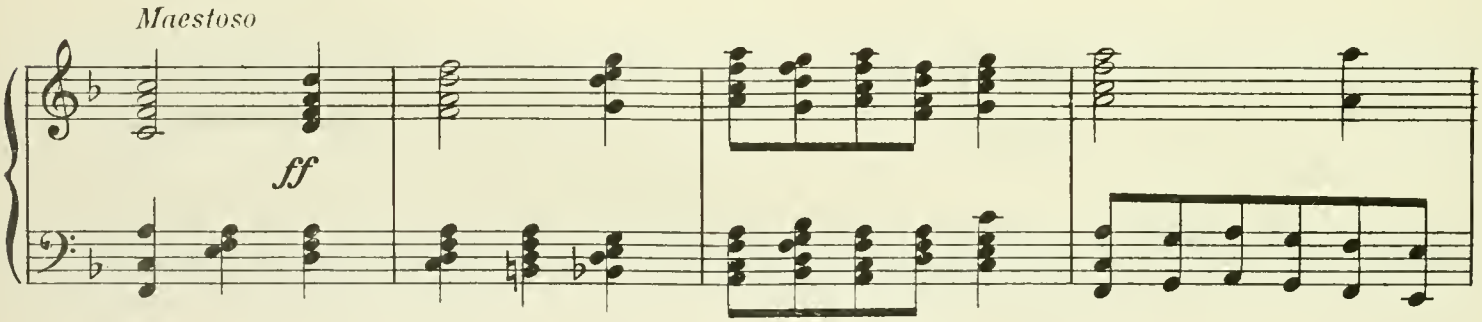
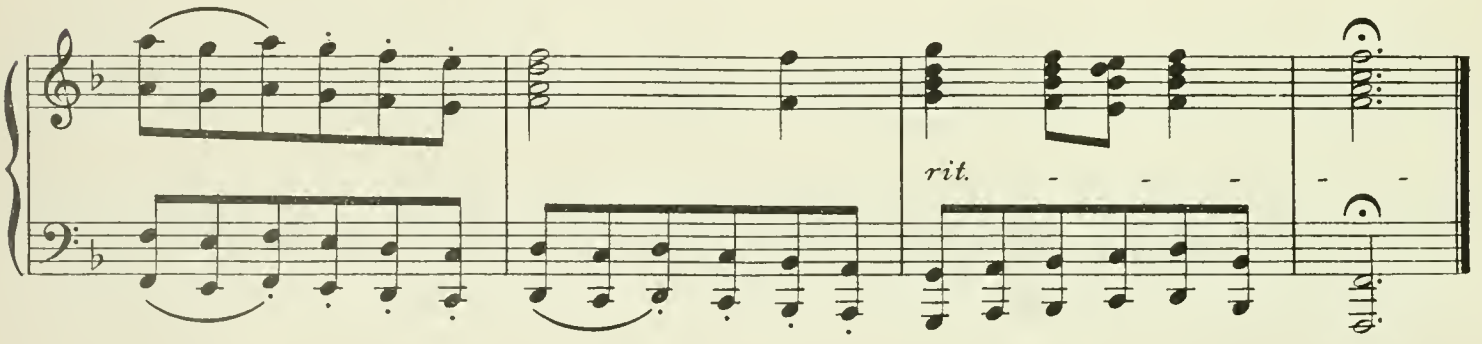
mf a tempo



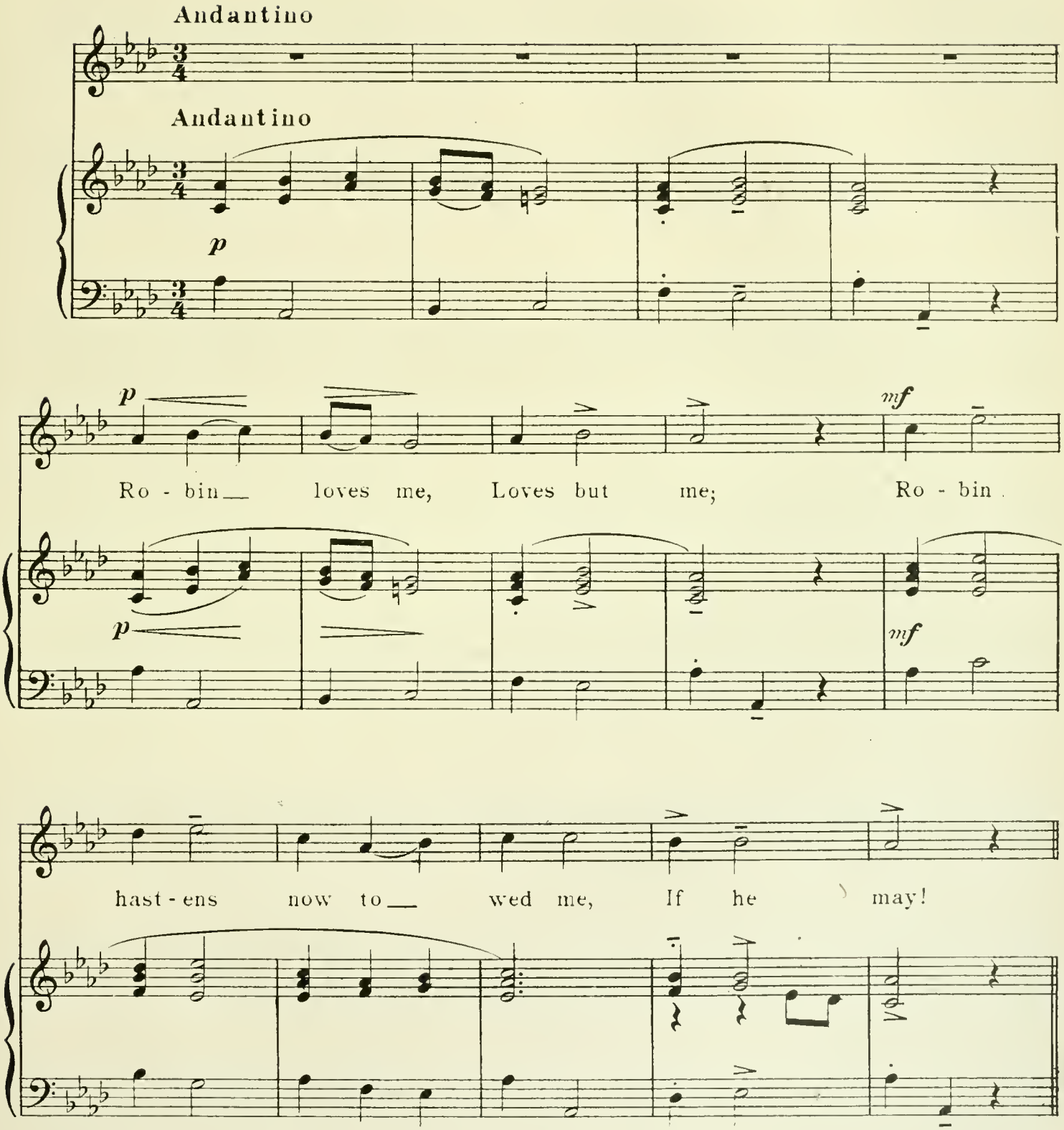

Maestoso
ff


rit.

ROBIN LOVES ME

V.

ADAM DE LA HALE
(c. 1285)



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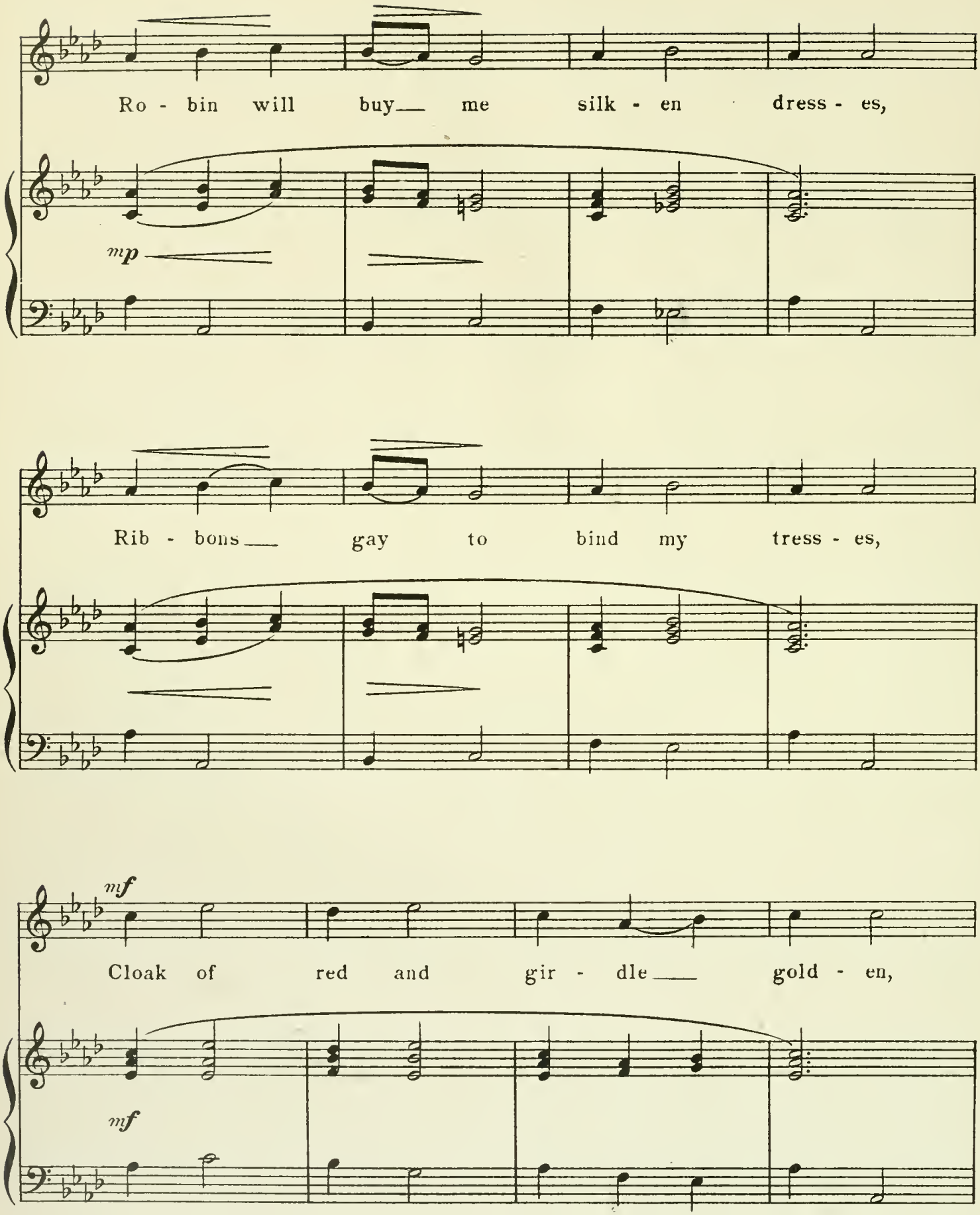
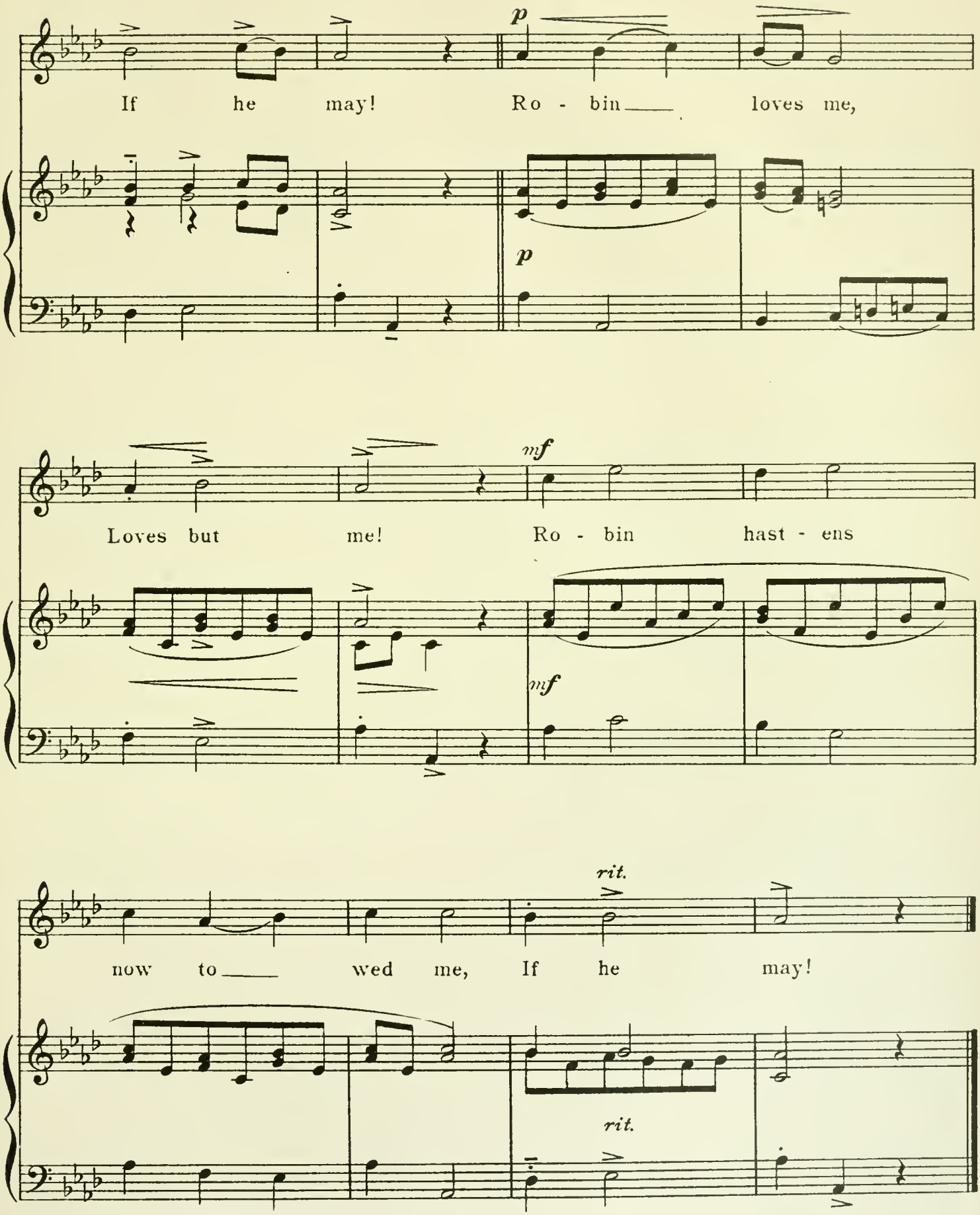
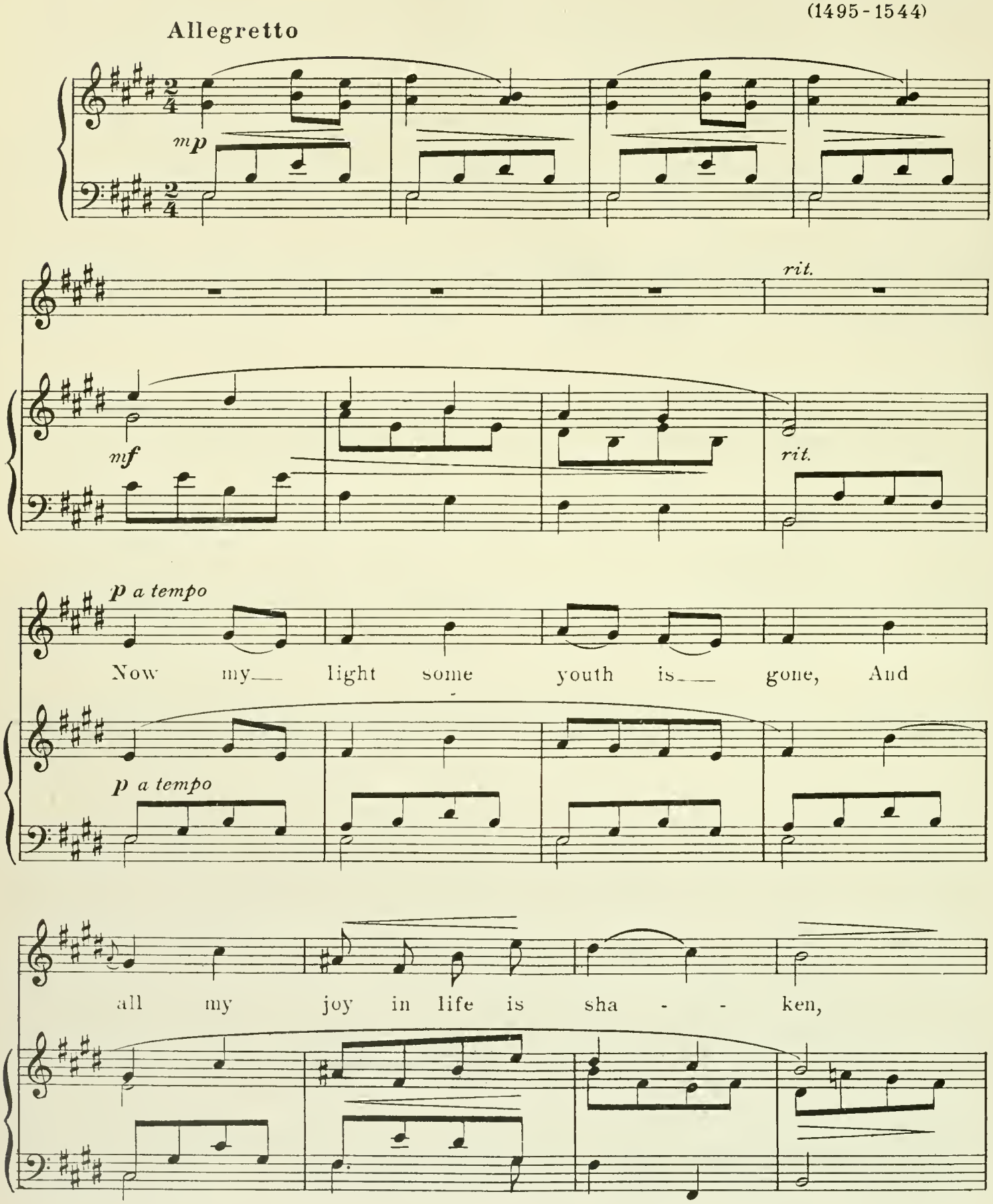

Ro - bin will buy me silk - en dress - es,
mp
Rib - bons gay to bind my tress - es,
mf
Cloak of red and gir - dle gold - en,
mf


p
If he may! Ro - bin loves me,
p
mf
Loves but me! Ro - bin hast - ens
mf
rit.
now to wed me, If he may!
rit.

NOW MY LIGHTSOME YOUTH IS GONE

VI.

CLÉMENT MAROT
(1495-1544)



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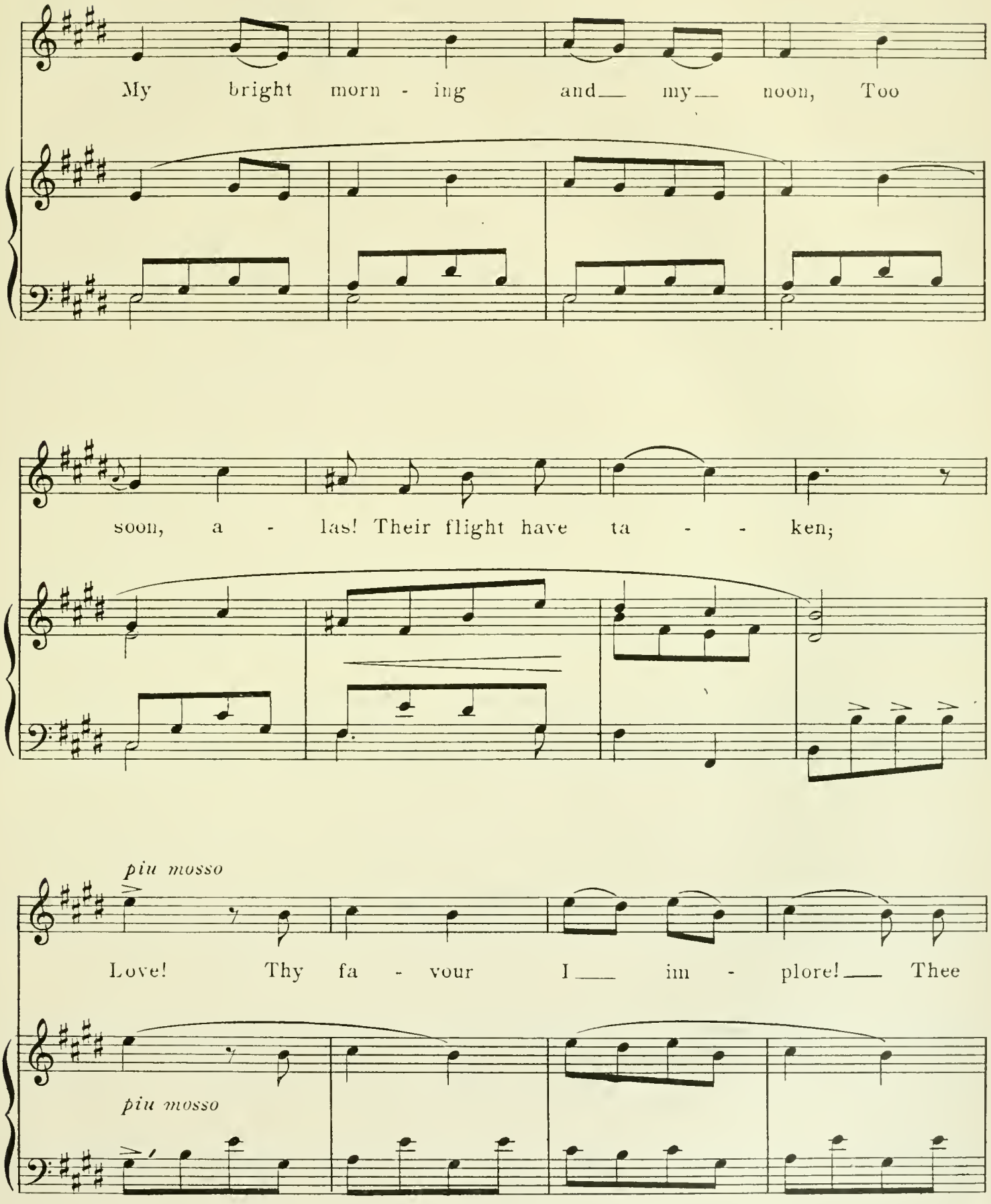
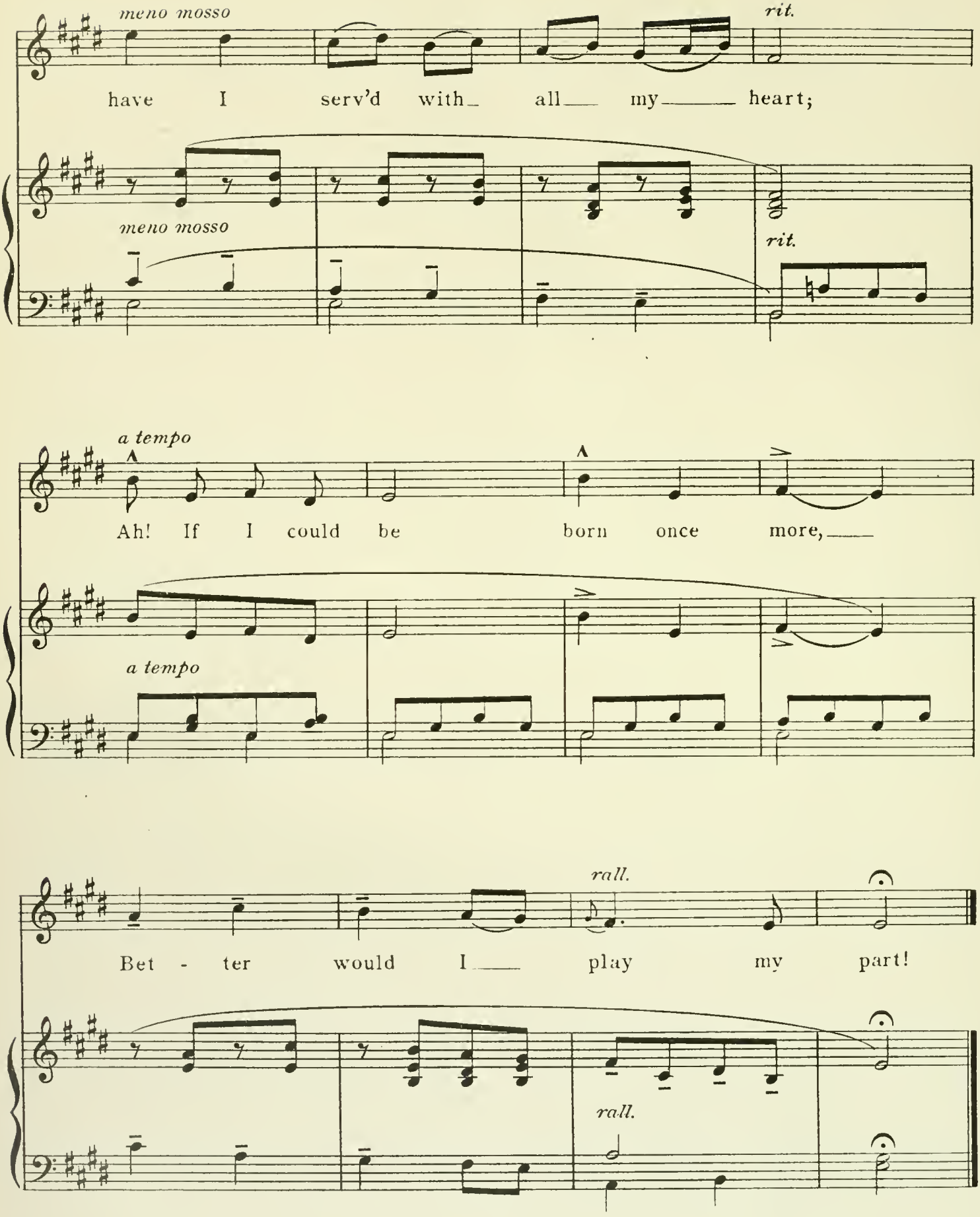

My bright morn - ing and my noon, Too
soon, a - las! Their flight have ta - - ken;
piu mosso
Love! Thy fa - vour I im - plore! Thee
piu mosso


meno mosso
rit.
have I serv'd with_ all___ my_____ heart;
meno mosso
rit.
a tempo
Ah! If I could be born once more,____
a tempo
rall.
Bet - ter would I___ play my part!
rall.